



The Lost-Artist

An exploration of the intra-actions among the meaning-making flows of affect within the painting-event.

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Cultural Policy and the Business of

Art MA-Thesis

Wordcount: 27900

13-12-2020

Abstract

This thesis sets out to research what flows of affect occur in the painter/painting assemblage. It explores the movements of the painter/painting assemblage through time in the painting-event. It utilizes New Materialist and Posthuman theory and methodology to explore in what way the material, semiotic, and social flows of affect intra-act and articulate themselves in the painting-event. It does so by exploring what the painter and painting do rather than what they are. The thesis tries to give insight into the inner workings of ontological meaning-making of the painting-event. It explores the articulation of material mattering through the painting-event and maps in what way the act of painting finds consistency in the unknown. In doing so, it demonstrates that the intra-actions between the meaningless meaning of the social flows and the mattering matter of the material flows articulate the painting and the painter. The findings are supported by a case study which consists of photo-documentation of the painting-events and extensive open interviews with the painter Peter Geerts. In these open interviews, his experience with his paintings is extensively discussed. The case study shows how the different de/re/territorializing flows of affect intra-act to overcome the event-horizon of the known and co-constitute the painter and painting at their banks. The thesis discusses how the unknown seeps into the known by the intra-acting flows of affect. It explores the mode of becoming of the painting-event before it enters the dominating social flows of affect from the cultural field of production in an effort to expose the relationalities of the human in materiality.

Key concepts: *intra-action, flows of events, assemblage, differing, meaningless, unknown, infrathin, negative prehension.*



Before I get into the thick of it, I would like to take the opportunity here to thank Peer for his hospitality and patience. His willingness and openness to share his experience as an artist and painter made it possible for me to embark on a path of flight that has led to this thesis. His works and insight has complemented my journey in ways that will forever change my ways of thinking.

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1. Introduction

An artist staring at a blank slate envisions opportunities and possibilities, a meandering that coincides along a path into the existence of the artwork. The artist is in a mode of being that is in the process of meaning-making towards a becoming of the artwork. In that first moment, the artwork can become anything; the artwork is in flux, and in that infinite moment it *is*, after that, it is all downhill. The artwork experiences a moment in which it becomes a convergence of becoming in a meaningful manner within its frame.

Artists have been a vital part of culture since the beginning of time. Some say they are at the root of culture and civilization. Others say they are inherently outside of it. Whatever the case is, they are there, and they invigorate society with vitality. By creating art, the artist connects the layers of society through artistic expression, often in the shape of the artwork. The artwork is, among other things, able to evoke, stir, surprise, puzzle, confirm, and provoke. It is a versatile thing, and its paramount quality is perhaps that it is hard to grasp and define into a single concept, shape, or form. These eluding qualities make the artwork and, by extension and relationality, the artist, an interesting subject to research.

There is a lot of theory and research on the values of art, how art can be translated into a cost/benefit model to legitimize the values and investment in it. Not only the monetary and economic values (Mommaas 2012) but also others, like cultural (Gielen 2004), social (Belfiore et al. 2008), political (Raad van Cultuur 2017), instrumental (Gielen et al. 2014), educational (Arts Council England), private (ArtTactic 2018), public (Oosterbaan 1990, Van den Hoogen 2012), cognitive (Klamer 2008, 2011, 2016), health (RAND 2005) and intrinsic values (Laermans 2004, Schrijvers et al. 2015) have been extensively researched. Scientists, policymakers and representatives of the cultural sector are diligently trying to identify and legitimize the value of culture to justify art and its accompanying policies. In that wealth of research and resources, the concepts for the reception and legitimization of art is perhaps best theorized in the works of Pierre Bourdieu.

In his book *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993), Pierre Bourdieu considers cultural production a field in which social forces compete for power. In the field of cultural production, the standard rules of the economic market do not apply. Bourdieu argues that instead, in this field, the production happens in the opposite way. For example, a greater public appreciation of a product can lead to more money, legitimacy, and power in an economic field. According to Bourdieu, this happens vice versa in the field of cultural production. If an artist reaches the public and legitimizes himself among that public, this subsequently undermines his legitimacy as an autonomous and authentic artist. This example illustrates the peculiar position of the artist: his position in the cultural field undermines his position in the economic

field and vice versa. It paints a picture that the artist needs to find common ground with the dominant reception to get consecrated by the dominant forces in the field (Bourdieu 31).

Given that the works of art exist as symbolic objects only if they are known and recognized, that is, socially instituted as works of art and received by spectators capable of knowing and recognizing them as such, the sociology of art and literature has to take as its object not only the material production but also the symbolic production of the work, i.e. the production of the value of the work or, which amounts to the same thing, of the belief in the value of the work. (Bourdieu 37)

Bourdieu positions the artwork as a symbolic product that gains its consecration through the belief in its value. The artwork becomes a socialized thing in Bourdieu's field theory that gains its value by how it is perceived, rather than what it is. The focus on the symbolic values of art puts the artwork in a predetermined socialized frame that gives the dominant forces in the field the power to inject it with their meaning. The artwork has become a symbolic object infused by the dominant axioms that have taken precedence over its material being. The value of artwork is dictating what the artwork is, instead of the artwork dictating itself. Bourdieu's cultural field theory invoked new theories in what way the value of the artwork is being dictated by social forces. Especially the theories of Nathalie Heinich and Hans Abbing are of interest here.

Nathalie Heinich wrote about the sacrifice the artist needs to make for the artwork to become a martyr of western culture in her book *THE GLORY OF VAN GOGH* (2003). She makes the Marxist argument that the value of art comes from the sacrifice the artist makes (Heinich 142). Art should be the most valuable fetish-commodity on earth, considering the intrinsic investment of labour and sacrifice by the excluded artist, where "his degeneration in the present proves his future greatness" (Heinich 141). Heinich coins the 'van Gogh effect' in which Van Gogh "has become a model, in the dual sense of an example to be followed, and a pattern determining the configuration of values" (Heinich 141). This is where the artist becomes the stereotypical martyr, the myth, who sacrifices himself for this artwork. Heinich argues that the reception of art has increasingly become valued by the discourse of past rarities, instead of that of beauty, personal feeling, and common sense, inevitably reducing it to commerce (Heinich 144). This reduction brings into question if artworks within established society can be seen as art at all, as "all genuinely innovative creators can only clash with the common outlook, with their contemporaries' *doxa*, because they contravene the accepted norms" (Heinich 145).

Hans Abbing offers another theory that finds its ground in Bourdieu's field theory. According to Abbing, the author of *Why artists are poor?* (2008), and *Changing Social Economy of Art: Are the Arts Becoming Less Exclusive?* (2019), the art world governs the production of serious art and controls the number of artists (Abbing *Changing* 31). Contemporary art in the art world takes place in the arena of cultural production in a fight between exclusivity and reception. "The artworks must fall into a category of art that is defined as true art by an art world or rather, by the art world establishment and those in the establishment who feel responsible for the category" (Abbing *Changing* 46). The art world and its dominating views have become a diligent frame around the artwork. These views keep the artwork in a place dominated by a value-centred ideology. In search of value and exclusivity, the artist gets marginalized to the fringes of the social sphere as an explorer to come back with new trinkets for the amusements of the art world. This "love of exclusivity", Abbing argues, "is an important motor behind exclusion" (Abbing *Changing* 117).

The Bourdieusian arguments that Heinich and Abbing make are all constructed within the socio-cultural framework of the field of cultural production, which is anthropocentric by definition. The concept of the artwork gets determined within a performative feedback loop by the established orders. The artwork gets infused with meaning by the dominating group, and if this meaning is lost, there are studies on its values within the system that legitimize it, to push it back into the field. They look upon the artwork from a socio-cultural and economic perspective to find the Marxist commodifying identity that the artwork is consecrated with, in an effort to endow the artwork with meaning and value. The artwork gets a performative identity within the field of cultural production, where talent, novelty, and exclusiveness get sourced to socio-economic ends to perform to the iteration of the dominating values. In this dominating system, the status of the reception of the artwork directly correlates to its value and meaning. The artwork is sourced for the control of the dominant axiom. It leaves little to no room for the artwork itself to articulate, and it constricts the artwork to the comforting and familiar anthropocentric boundaries that are perpetuated. In this thesis I will research what the artwork is outside these dominating perspectives and argue the manner in which the artwork articulates itself, outside of the socio-economic forces.

Bourdieu writes that the artwork is not always part of the cultural field. He explicates that there is a decisive moment that the artwork enters the field of cultural production and becomes part of it. Bourdieu refers to the artwork as 'mana', 'magic', and 'charismatic ideology' (Bourdieu 81) before it gets whisked away in the field of cultural production and does not give any definition to these terms. Bourdieu states that the magic act of the signature on the artwork is a matter of *collective misrecognition*, "which

is collectively produced and maintained, and the source of the power that the magician appropriates” (Bourdieu 81). It is precisely this state of mysticism of the artwork that I want to explore in this thesis. In this state, without the socializing forces of the cultural field, the artwork can be seen and can speak for itself. Bourdieu states that “the social scientist's task is not to draw a dividing line between the agents involved in it by imposing a so-called operational definition, ... but to describe a state (long-lasting or temporary) of these struggles” (Bourdieu 42). Therefore, to define the artwork I will not try to impose upon it a new operational definition, but rather research its state of struggle upon which the operational definition is being imposed. To explore the state of struggle of the artwork I will make use of New Materialist and Posthuman theory in which particularly the New Materialist theory focuses on the ontological manifestation of matter and how it intra-acts with the human.

The New Materialist and Posthuman discourse can give unique insights to describe the state of the artwork. To explore the state of the struggle of the artwork I will focus on the Posthuman theories in the works of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (2003), Rosi Braidotti (2011, 2013), Francesca Ferrando (2019), Donna Haraway (2019), as well as the writings on New Materialism from Jane Bennett (2010), Karen Barad (2007), Erin Manning (2015), and Brian Massumi (2015). These works can give insights into what the ‘magician’ mobilizes in the creation of the artwork before it enters the field of cultural production. New Materialist discourse promotes a release of the grip of the known definitions, not to reject historical epistemologies, but rather to become a new open-ended transformative state of the progression of expression and vitality. The discourse specializes in the circumvention of anthropocentric domination and searches for new ways to define our world. It promotes a state of getting lost that openly invites the new and the unknown in the discovery that “urges us to think critically and creatively about who and what we actually are in the process of becoming” (Braidotti *Posthuman* 12).

Before I get further into the theory I would like to address the paradox that inhabits the Posthuman and New Materialist discourse. New Materialism creates an impossibility of being congruent when writing from its views. If I were to employ the theory of New Materialism in this thesis, not writing ‘about it’ but instead ‘through it’, this thesis would never be able to comply with the standards that are asked of it by the university. The discourse is created to undermine and expose the social constructs that dictate the perceptions of the social world. This means that, by the discourse being a product of the social world, it is actively undermining itself. Tugashi reminds us that Deleuze and Guattari write that rhizomatic thoughts are “mere tools for thinking”, as they add, “it is thought itself that requires the thinker” (Tugashi 212, Deleuze and Guattari 69). Deleuze and Guattari also emphasize that their concepts are thinking tools and not a science (Deleuze and Guattari 22). It is designed to undermine the dominant thinking patterns

and search for alternatives. Likewise, Heidegger has stated that “thinking begins only when we have come to know that reason, glorified for centuries, is the most stiff necked adversary of thought” (Heidegger 112). This thesis itself, having to adhere to certain academic standards, is an example of how New Materialism conflicts with the current dominant frameworks that are in place to solidify and measure value. Jacques Derrida reminds us that “these values are most often subjected to the unquestioned authority of a principle of reason” (Derrida 16). Therefore, throughout this thesis, I will explore the notions of New Materialism and will take necessary leeway to palter instead of making concepts concrete. The aim is not to make concepts on art concrete but instead, to release, make it polyvalent, and ambiguous, to explore how art becomes, in addition to what art is.

This thesis breaks with logic on occasion and makes leaps to explore the possibilities and affect of the New Materialism theory in relation to the subject of this thesis. To give the artwork the space to speak for itself an ontological approach of its doing is needed. Explaining it would only subject it back into the framework of epistemological structures of logic, linguistics, and historicity. In a rhizomatic structure, there are no linear trains of thought, because that would implicate a solitary, isolated thinker. Instead, there is the rhizomatic oil spill that seeps out in all directions, a non-deterministic exploration of possibility unhindered by any boundaries of solitary linear thinking. This thesis is a path of flight through that oil spill and supplies only one of the many paths that can be taken. It is a derivative of the more significant body from which it emerges. The idea and subjects in this thesis cannot be territorialized to a concrete singular concept; they can only be approached from different angles to narrow down the negative space it embodies. To put New Materialism into a linear system of a thesis is paradoxically absurd. It would constrict it to the system it tries to undermine. Therefore, the logic and academic structure that this thesis needs to comply with become second place to that exploration, but in the interest of practicality, this thesis still tries to adhere to the boundaries dictated by the academic structures. It is making this exercise borderline schizophrenic and contested. These paradoxical concepts will be substantiated further in the rest of the thesis.

To introduce New Materialism further I will now explain how it pertains to my research. Nick Fox and Pam Alldred argue in *Sociology and the New Materialism* (2017) that New Materialism is a broad field that is mind-numbingly diverse, what the “various approaches have in common is a concern with the material workings of power, and a focus firmly upon social production rather than upon social construction” (Fox and Alldred 4). New Materialism employs a holistic approach to existence, where all things are equally important, and it emphasizes “ontology (concern with the kinds of things that exist) rather than epistemology (which addresses how these things can be known by an observer)” (Fox and

Allred 6). To reconsider the known, New Materialism calls for a reevaluation of epistemological categorizing and rejects all differing and boundaries among them (Braidotti *Posthuman* 27, Fox and Allred 7). Human and non-humans, animate and inanimate, nature and culture, mind and matter, are all considered equal footing (Fox and Allred 7). Therefore, from a New Materialist view, an artwork is not a social consecrated object due to the field of cultural production, but rather the articulation of semiotics and materiality in its own right. The artwork does not need the diligent framing for it to be, as it already is. The epistemological framing by the art world is added to the artwork in retrospect to make sense of it and “fulfils a mirror function that confirms” the “socially supported systems of dominant values” (Braidotti *Posthuman* 29). These New Materialist concepts reflect the Bourdieusian concepts that Abbing and Heinich argue and offer tools to uncover the artwork from its social supported systems.

Before the artwork can be uncovered it is important to discuss how New Materialist theory considers a positive connection between every single thing and is mobilized to reveal the relations between them. These relations can reveal the dominating social values to uncover structures of oppression and be used to uncover more subtle relations on a more local scale. Relationality is not limited to human-to-human interaction and can occur among all kinds of things, be it material or immaterial, human or non-human, nature or culture, or any other combination. Karen Barad argues in her book *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007) that matter can be seen “as a dynamic and shifting entanglement of relations, rather than as a property of things” (Barad 35). She argues that matter is “neither fixed and given nor the mere result of different processes. Matter is produced and productive, generated and generative” (Barad 137). The artwork is not a thing dictated by its assigned properties, but its matter is generative by its relational connection with other matter. They relationally bring each other forth into the world.

The relationality among things is a result of the affect that things have on each other. In *The Politics of affect* (2015) Brian Massumi states that “the formula ‘to affect and be affected’ is also proto-political in the sense that it includes relation in the definition” (Massum *Politics* ix). Affect is not just the relations among things, but it shapes one from the other. It exerts a force that divides and makes the difference between the two known. Massumi implores that “to affect and to be affected is to be open to the world, to be active in it and to be patient for its return activity.” (Massum *Politics* ix). Things are not static but in a state of flux, always under the affect of one another. Affect, “is a ‘becoming’, or in other words, a force that achieves some change of state or capabilities in a relation” (Fox and Allred 18). The artwork, therefore, is the result of generative matter that is produced in the relational becoming with the flows of affect. The affect that leads to relations among things happens through a flow in time that

perpetuates things into existence through their encounters. “One always affects and is affected in encounters; which is to say, through events. To begin affectively in change is to begin in relation, and to begin in relation is to begin in the event.” (Massumi *Politics* ix)

Barad refers to the event as a phenomenon. She states that: “‘Things’ do not preexist; they are agentially enacted and become determinately bounded and propertied within phenomena” (Barad 150). The materiality of the artwork serves as a manifestation of affect. To research the artwork it is, therefore, paramount to discover the affect that generates its becoming, rather than focusing on its material representation. Its physical materiality does not define the artwork, but rather the artwork can be seen as “an ontological performance of the world in its ongoing articulation” (Barad 149). This articulation is moulded and shaped by the affect and relationality that brings the artwork into existence. Affect cuts across the usual categories and subjects of epistemology, and the artwork does not confine to one state. Massumi states that “affect is strangely polyvalent” because it is “complicated by the fact that although affect’s openness is unconfined in the interiority of a subject, ..., it is at the same time formative of subjects. Although affect fundamentally concerns relations in encounters, it is at the same time positively productive of the individualities in relation” (Massumi *Politics* x). That is to say, that the materiality of the artwork is a result of the relational affect that is being applied to it. The artwork would not exist if not for the relational affect that constitutes it, and the flows of affect would not exist if there was no artwork it could affect. They are co-constituents of each other; they bring each other forth. Affect perpetuates through time in flux, flowing from one state to the next. Barad defines affect as an agency and states that “this ongoing flow of agency through which part of the world makes itself differentially intelligible to another part of the world and through which causal structures are stabilized and destabilized does not take place in space and time but happens in the making of spacetime itself. Reality is composed not of things-in-themselves or things-behind-phenomena but of things-in-phenomena” (Barad 140).

To define the boundaries of the affect, Deleuze and Guattari proposed the concept of assemblages. For this thesis, I will use the concept of assemblage to define a boundary of the artwork that will be researched. Fox describes that “what holds assemblages together, Deleuze and Guattari suggested, are the capacities of assembled relations to affect or be affected. They define assemblages as “a dynamic ‘territorialization’ (a process of ‘specification’) and ‘de-territorialization’ (‘de-specification’ or ‘generalization’) of the capacities of bodies and the other relations within assemblages, continually in flux” (Fox and Alldred 18). By determining an assemblage for the artwork the flow of events that occur within the assemblage and its unfolding inner workings, the territorializing and de-territorializing affects, can be revealed that lead to its articulation. Deleuze and Guattari write that “an assemblage, in its multiplicity,

necessarily acts on semiotic flows, material flows, and social flows simultaneously” (Deleuze and Guattari 23). These are the relational flows that work in unison in the assemblage that yield the articulation of the artwork. During this thesis I will address these three flows further and discuss in the case study how they affect the artwork in the assemblage.

The assemblage in this thesis will be used to research the flows of affect between the painter and the painting. Paintings, as do all artworks, have the quality of existing on the convergence of the material, the social, and the semiotic flows of affect. Their creation exhibits an entanglement between the material and the semiotic that come into existence by the hand of the artist. The creation of paintings specifically gives insight into how material flows act and connect to the articulation of meaning-making. The act of painting is a vehicle in understanding the flows of events because it is materiality made by human hands, thereby giving insight into the affect among the material, the semiotic, and the social flows. Differently than linguistic practices that connect meaning to material, painting connects the material to meaning. The painting, as an artwork, has a semiotic expression that eludes the linguistic practices and manifests itself through different mechanics of materiality. In *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (1981) Deleuze states that “the task of painting is defined as the attempt to render visible forces that are not themselves visible” (Deleuze 56). For Deleuze, painting is not about creating form and shapes, but rather about capturing forces that exert on the body leading to sensations (Deleuze 56-57). The painting, therefore, is an expression of forces that preexist the painting itself. The painting is not a mere result of the agency of the painter, but rather an articulation of relational forces of affect among the two.

In this thesis, I will research the relations between the painter and painting before it enters the dominant social flows of the field of cultural production, to be consecrated and misrecognized into the socio-economical artwork that is “being used as a vague metaphor to describe the calculation of interest” (Latour 13). I will utilize the New Materialist theories to explore in what manner the artwork becomes before it is appropriated and gets bound in the social framework of the art market and its accompanying framework of social production and performativity. I will focus on determining the flows of events that occur in the creation of the painting that can give insight into what the artist mobilizes when he envisions opportunities and possibilities, the meandering that coincides along a path of affect that is the artwork. The focus for this thesis will be on the intra-relations of the material, social and semiotic flows of affect among the painter and the painting and how the two affect each other in their assemblage. This exploration is not to assign new categorizations of values as an alternative to the field of cultural production, but rather to explore what the painting itself is outside the validating treadmill of the field of cultural production. This thesis is an attempt to pull away the curtain of social production if you will. In

this thesis, I will explore what flows of events occur that lead to the articulation of the painting to try and give some power back to the artwork, to find the voice outside of the anthropocentric appropriation and its operational definition. The central question in this thesis will be as follows: What flows of affect occur within the painter/painting assemblage?

To answer this question I will use the methodology explained by Nick Fox and Pam Alldred. In their work *Sociology and the New Materialism* (2017), they address how the assemblage can be utilized to reveal the micro-politics of the flows of affect that constitute it. They argue for the concept of the research-assemblage that can be researched using three types of 'machines', the Data-collection machine, the Data-analysis machine, and a Reporting machine. This will be addressed further in chapter three. The methodology was applied in a case study where the creations of three paintings were followed to map the flows of affect that led to their becoming. This has been done by following the relational processes of the painter Peter Geerts (1957) and the paintings he was working on. The process has been documented by conducting weekly interviews with Peter Geerts on his relation with his paintings and weekly photo-documentation of those paintings. For three months, I have visited Peter Geerts in his studio to get a personal feel of the process and to experience the relational flows of affect personally. The discoveries made in the case study will be discussed further in chapter four.

This thesis is intended to explore the premise that the contemporary artist has not been marginalized and excluded to the periphery of society by social flows of the field of cultural production, but rather the artist is getting lost in the creation of the artwork. It is exactly how the artist becomes, in the exploration of the inherent qualities of the unfamiliar, vitality, and life. The lost-artist is a mode of becoming of the painting and the painter. They create a bridge on which the unfamiliar oddity seeps into the social-consciousness. The unfamiliar is not to signify novelty, uniqueness, exclusivity, or authenticity. The unfamiliar is outside dichotomies and contradiction; it is a marker for the unknown, the strange and peculiar. It is strange to explore the painting in text, as it is inherently made to communicate the things that cannot be written. It seems a bit redundant to rehash the meaning of an artwork in light of the New Materialist train of thought, as it should always evolve to new sites of meaning. It is, however, interesting to explore how it performs its meaning and in what way it articulates, in short, how the painting is becoming. It is not the meaning of the painting that is at stake in this thesis, but rather in what way meaning reveals itself and lays itself bare through the painting.

The subjects in this thesis will be addressed in three main sections; the theory, the methodology, and the case study. In the theoretical chapter, 'Affective Painting', I will use New Materialist theories offered by Bennett (2010), Barad (2007), Manning (2015), Massumi (2015), Deleuze (1981), and Guattari

(2003), to explore the concept of the painting, the painter, how they fit in an assemblage, what flows of affect occur, and how they affect each other through time, in the event. In the methodology chapter, I will discuss the methodology offered by Nick Fox and Pam Alldred. In their book, *Sociology and the New Materialism* (2017), they give an extensive account of how to apply New Materialist concepts into a methodology that I have utilized. The case study chapter will discuss the extensive interviews with the painter Peter Geerts, and the photo-documentation of the three paintings he worked on during the time of the research. The case study will address the sanctuary of the studio, the fight for the meaningless, how the act of painting measures meaning, the three independent painting-events, and to finish a discussion on the flows of affect among the painter and painting assemblage.

2. Affective Painting

In this theoretical chapter I will explore what the flows of events that affect the painter/painting assemblage are and, more importantly, what they do. This is easier said than done. The field of New Materialism is contradictory and always in search of new and different vantage points. Fox and Alldred state that New Materialism is a broad field that is mind-numbingly diverse (Fox and Alldred 4). It has yielded more than a few theoretical offshoots; Jane Bennett's Vital Materialism, Karen Barad's Feminist New Materialism (FNM), Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory (ANT), and Ian Bogost's Alien Phenomenology to name a few. What they have in common is that they embark on the exploration of the place of the human within the material world and how the two interact. The different fields have their roots in critical feminism, and sometimes I wonder if there are any differences, or if it is just a case of emancipating any and all human-created epistemological truths. The New Materialist theories all take the effort to release perpetuated truths from their shackles in their social systems of anthropocentric habits of power to give them a new chance to manifest within its temporal situation. What they have in common is that "they supply a posthuman focus for the social sciences and social inquiry that does not privilege humans in relation to the rest of the natural and social environment" (Fox and Alldred 5). For this thesis, I will primarily focus upon the two main offshoots of New Materialism, Bennett's Vital Materialism and Barad's Feminist New Materialism.

In her book *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, Karen Barad offers a Feminist New Materialism theory of ontology that is invested in materiality. Barad positions her theory as "a reassessment of physical and metaphysical notions that explicitly or implicitly rely on old ideas about the physical world- that is, we need a reassessment of these notions in terms of the best physical theories we currently have". "Based on a "diffractive" methodological approach" her book "demonstrates how and why we must understand in an integral way the roles of human and non-human, material and discursive, and natural and cultural factors in scientific and other practices." (Barad 25). Barad supplies a thorough conception of the 'agential real' and the 'agential-cut' that offer solutions to the differing of matter into mattering.

Jane Bennett takes the approach of Vital Materialism to New Materialism in her book *Vibrant Matter*. With her book, she hopes to "highlight the extent to which the human being and thinghood overlap, the extent to which the us and the it slip-slide into each other" (Bennett 4). In the book, she argues for thing-power, "the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle" (Bennett 6). In it, she makes a distinction between vital materiality and thing-power and antimateriality as the commodification of things that "conceals the vitality of matter" (Bennett 5). The commodification in the field of cultural production puts the painting in an antimaterial state, devoid

of vital materiality, showing that thing-power is not just a shape, form, or concept, but rather an expression of affect. Bennet argues that the interpretation of this expression is explained away by anthropocentric play of human powers and “this impulse toward cultural, linguistic, or historical constructivism, which interprets any expression of thing-power as an effect of culture and the play of human powers, politicizes moralistic and oppressive appeals to “nature”” (Bennett 17). From the viewpoint of thing-power, the artwork from the artist becomes a manifestation of vital matter that “arrives through humans but not entirely because of them” (Bennett 17), giving the artwork agency outside of the artist and the consecration of the field of cultural production.

Rebekah Sheldon argues that the differences in New Materialism result from the radically different ways in which they treat human knowledge systems (Grusin 195). She states that within Object Orientated Ontology “epistemology is epiphenomenal, a second-order representation whose range of effects is limited to human knowers” (Grusin 196). The human is the observant of the material world of which an interpretation is made. This view suggests a disconnect of the human epistemology with the material world where the interpretation of materiality is projected upon materiality. Hereby, the material world is created in the image of its perceiver, which empowers the humancentric observations that are perpetuated in epistemology. Jane Bennet states that “we are also non-human and that things, too, are vital players in the world” (Bennett 4). She continues that she hopes that the “enhance receptivity to the impersonal life that surrounds and infuses us, will generate a more subtle awareness of the complicated web of dissonant connections between bodies, and will enable wiser interventions into that ecology” (Bennett 4). New Materialism in Bennett’s *Vital Materialism* relates to epistemology as a smokescreen, or interference, to the human interaction with the material world.

For Feminist New Materialism, Sheldon argues that “by contrast, epistemology is an agent with directly material consequences” (Grusin 196). The human and materiality are relationally tied together in their mutual creation. Sheldon states that Feminist New Materialism “begins from the assumption that ideas and things do not occupy separate ontological orders but instead are co-constituents in the production of the real” (Grusion 196). The epistemological meaning is not the projected interpretation that is cast over materiality to interfere, but instead connects with it and adds to its manifestation. Barad argues in *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007) that “what is needed is a method attuned to the entanglement of the apparatuses of production, one that enables genealogical analyses of how boundaries are produced rather than presuming sets of well-worn binaries in advance” (Barad 30).

Sheldon’s arguments suggest that the different theories of New Materialism are not just the undermining of the epistemological status quo. However, instead, they explore, from a different basis of

departure, the ontological awareness of the human in materiality. Nevertheless, the proposed outcomes, what they intend to do, are similar as Barad echo's Bennett's previous statement that "a reassessment of physical and metaphysical notions that explicitly or implicitly rely on old ideas about the physical world—that is, we need a reassessment of these notions in terms of the best physical theories we currently have" (Barad 24). Although by different affect, they both aim to achieve a very similar effect.

Vital Materialism and Feminist New Materialism are not quantitative tools of measurement that produce new meaning but are qualitative thinking tools that lead to new ways of measurement – in turn leading to new meaning. They both employ at their base a rethinking of epistemology that favours ontology. They do not measure things by what it is, or supposed to be, but rather by what things do. They measure in what way humans are affected by their surroundings and how those relations manifest in the moment. They attempt to find the affect of materiality by measuring its resulting effect on humanity. New Materialism is, therefore, uniquely equipped to research how the painter and painting relate.

By primarily using the theories of Feminist New Materialism and Vital Materialism I intend to discover how relational forces act between the painter and the painting. The painting is a clear human-produced materiality. Its position as a meaning-making entity between the human and materiality makes it an exciting thing to explore. The painting extensively showcases the co-production of meaning between semiotic, material and social flows of affect. In this theoretical chapter, I intend to explore how the painter and painting relate and interact, or better yet 'intra-act'. To do this, I will first explore what a painting is in light of a New Materialist perspective. I will address what agency a painting has by utilizing the writing of Deleuze in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* and connect it with the theories of Barad and Bennett. In the following section, I will address the position of the painter in relation to the painting. Instead of viewing the painter from its social and economic position, from what it produces in the art world, I will discuss the painter from the place where he becomes a painter, in relation to the painting. In the third section, I will address in what ways the painter and painting co-constitute each other in the assemblage. Here, I will discuss how they are relationally connected and articulate the painting-event. Finally, I will discuss the flows of events by addressing how the deterritorialization of the social flows produce meaningless meaning, that in turn connect to mattering flows of material and semiotic affect, and eventually reterritorializes to binding boundaries among the painter and painting in the painting-event.

2.1. *The Paint(h)ing*

To find an explanation how the painting and the painter relate to each other I will first explore what kind of thing the painting might be. The Cambridge Dictionary describes the word ‘painting’ as; ‘a picture made using paint’. This is a description that thoroughly uses the materiality of the painting to describe and subjectify what it is. What a painting does is a different story. The painting’s materiality is hard to define within a category. Woodward suggests six categories to describe materiality; things, objects, artefacts, goods, commodities, and actants. A Thing, Woodward describes, is a concrete and real material existence with an inert or inanimate quality. Objects are discrete components of material culture. Artefacts are physical products of human activity. Goods are objects that are produced under specific market relations, assigned to a system of value. Commodities are related to goods, as something to be exchanged (Woodward 15). A painting could fit into all of these five categories, given the right circumstances. A painting is; a material with inert qualities, an object of material culture, an artefact of human activity, a good that is produced under specific market relations, and a commodity to be exchanged. It is hard to define the painting to a single category as it morphs through all.

The categories are, however, all based on a social perspective of the painting. They assign a social value to the painting, the non-human, in relation to the human, solidifying the dichotomy. “Kopytoff points out that in Western thought a mythic dichotomy exists between the notion of ‘individualized’ persons and ‘commoditized’ things which has constructed an inflexible and limiting binary for understanding the relations between persons and things.” (Woodward 16) This inflexibility leaves the painting dead in the water, constrained to its categorization just for the purpose to make sense of it. A painting is so much more, especially once an open-ended view is applied that reveals its nature. The actant category Woodward offers might be best suited for this.

Woodward states that the actant category is “developed from recent approaches in the sociology of science and technology which refers to entities – both human and non-human – which have the ability to ‘act’ socially” (Woodward 15). By dissolving the boundary between the painter who acts and the painting which is seen as inanimate or ‘outside’, the application of the term ‘actant’ to the painting “is designed to overcome any a priori distinction between the social, technological and natural worlds, and emphasizes the inextricable links between humans and material things” (Woodward 15). It gives the painting an equal footing to its surroundings as a non-human among humans. The actant category also frees the painting of its prior descriptors, because it is now, as an acting entity, able to move outside of these boundaries. This freedom makes it impossible to label what the painting is and makes it essential to define what it does and how it acts between humans and non-humans.

The painting is just as hard to grasp within the spectrum of New Materialism. The painting is the result of a humancentric event. It is meticulously crafted through the painters' intuition and craftsmanship. The painting can be seen as a non-human produced by a human, which makes it appear that its existence is a mere result of human agency. What 'acts' can be attributed to a painting? Deleuze writes extensively about paintings in his book *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*. In it, Deleuze describes the painting as "the attempt to render visible forces that are not themselves visible" (Deleuze 56). The painting, therefore, already exists in an invisible state; it is just missing its physical materiality. Deleuze argues that the painting is made and everything the painter "has in his head or around him is already in the canvas, more or less virtually, more or less actually, before he begins his work" (Deleuze 86). The painting has already begun to affect the painter before it has even started to materialize. It somehow moves from a state of invisible to visible in the periphery of the painter. It somehow creeps in the painters' awareness by affect.

Affect, Massumi argues, can be divided into two tracks: the quality and the intensity track. Where the affect of qualification, on the one hand, "indexes the normal labelling of events as they turn into experience that people attach to affecting events as they turn experience into talk and narrative" (Wetherell 57). On the other hand, the intensity dimension of affect "appears to stand to one side of the usual cultural and discursive hubbub, registered if at all as a push, or as a flavour, as the white noise of physiological arousal, or as the unprocessed chaotic state of bodily happening" (Wetherell 57). The intensity affect, in this way, can be marked as the invisible force that leads to the manifestation of the painting, which in turn leads to the qualification of affect as an intelligible force. The two tracks of affect are divided into discourse, the quality affect, and embodiment, the intensity affect (Wetherell 59). The quality affect is similar to the socially constructed interference discussed by Bennett. She states that stuff commands "attention in its own right, as existents in excess of their association with human meanings, habits, or projects" (Bennett 4). Therefore, the painting does not only exist as a marker for human meaning in discourse, but it is also an embodiment that becomes in the modality of the intensity affect.

Deleuze states that everything in the painters head, or around him, "are all present in the canvas as so many images, actual or virtual, so that the painter does not have to cover a blank surface, but rather would have to empty it out, clear it, clean it" (Deleuze 86). What is at stake in the painting is not what already is, the representation, the cliché, the spectacle, the already socially constructed discourse; what is at stake is the intensity affect, the embodiment of the unseen and the unknown forces. The canvas, the paint, the figuration, the fracture from the bristle of the brush are all secondary in the painting (Deleuze 61). They all serve the rendering of forces and make visible the articulation, the sensation of the intensity

affect. The materialization of the painting acts as an embodiment to the unseen forces. The materiality of the painting relates and connects to the intensity affect, devoid of social interference or distractions that may have obscured it. The painting acts as a vehicle of negative space to the forces it lays bare. Alternatively, as Deleuze puts it; “When the visual sensation confronts the invisible force that conditions it, it releases a force that is capable of vanquishing the invisible force, or even befriending it” (Deleuze 62).

In the article *For a Pragmatics of the Useless, or the Value of the Infrathin* Erin Manning “explores how the infrathin comes to expression and asks what a politics of the infrathin might look like” (Manning *Pragmatics* 97). The infrathin denotes the most minuscule measure of the intensity affect. It can only be known in retrospect after it has been made visible, and concurrently disappears. The infrathin serves as a marker for the unknown invisible forces Deleuze relates too. It serves as a bridge for the unknown to become known, or the unseen to be seen, the invisible to become visible. Manning states; “the infrathin: the potentiation of a relational field that includes what can not quite be articulated, but nonetheless can be felt.” (Manning *Pragmatics* 99). Manning positions the infrathin as the event that pulls ‘stuff’ from the background to the foreground (Manning *Pragmatics* 100). From the unseen to the seen, from intensity affect to quality affect, if you will. It is the connection that is made that renders affect intelligible to the human spectrum, or, as Manning puts it, it actualizes force to form (Manning *Pragmatics* 100). By getting to form it consequently is reduced to a static and lifeless shape devoid of movement and agency. This, she states, is art’s risk (Manning *Pragmatics* 105). It is why the painting upon completion loses agency, will be stuck within its form, and risks classification and categorization. Therefore, Manning argues, “art is not its final taking-form, but the very process of its incompleteness” (Manning *Pragmatics* 111). The infrathin is the boundary between the known and the unknown. It is this boundary where a painting produces new meaning and contests the structures of the known.

Similar to Manning’s infrathin, Barad purposes, the agential-cut makes the unseen known (Barad 176). Barad argues that by measuring, ‘stuff’ comes into being. By measuring it reveals itself to the human spectrum and is quantified. To measure, Barad states, apparatuses are needed. These apparatuses are not just the devices you would find in a scientific lab but are all the things that are revealing the boundaries between ‘stuff’. If it is revealed, it must have measured its difference from other ‘stuff’. It is by these differing borders that one thing can be excluded from the other (Barad 151-153). Barad states that “apparatuses enact agential cuts that produce determinate boundaries and properties of “entities” within phenomena, where “phenomena” are the ontological inseparability of agentially intra-acting components” (Barad 148). That is to say; one thing cannot be known without knowing what it is not.

Within the field of the known, the agential cuts create a void that determines the unknown and upsets the structures of the known. The painting is the negative space of all that it is not, a void space leading to the reevaluation of it and everything that escapes it. In this way, the painting cannot do without its determining surroundings to become the void that invites the unknown to seep in the human spectrums of the known.

The painting, therefore, can be seen as an acting apparatus that actively excludes the known to the background, cleaning out the cliché, thus revealing the unknown to the foreground by becoming the vehicle for the infrathin to articulate on. It forms a bridge that lets the unknown seep into the known. The physical materialities of the painting, in this respect, are mere tools to bring the invisible forces of affect to fruition. The painting acts as a location for the arena of the ontological lost and found. It becomes a material signified for the invisible, “not a thing but a doing, a congealing of agency” (Barad 151). The painting is an apparatus used by the painter for the unknown to be measured and articulated on. In the next section, I will address in what ways the painter relates to the painting further.

2.2. *The Painter*

In this section I will discuss in what way the painter relates to the painting. The artist who creates the painting evidently becomes the painter. In light of the New Materialist view on a painting, the painter needs a different frame in relation to it. Not one that gages the interaction with the social sphere or the art world, like the integrated professional, maverick, folk artist, and naïve artist Becker purposes (Becker 228), but one that sustains an ambivalent position of the painter where he can maneuver to substantiate the painting. The maverick might come close, with its unique position outside of the art world, but he cannot “pursue the innovation without the support of other art world personnel” (Becker 233). The maverick categorization positions the artist heavily related to the art world, it puts the maverick into the position of the romantic extraordinary singular artist. The binary position Becker relates the artist to, inside or outside the art world, makes the maverick reactive to the art world he is evading. Without the art world, he could never be outside of it. I would like to propose a ‘lost artist’ that is not linked to the systems of the art world. It is quite the opposite of Becker’s definitions and does not adhere to the social sphere, but instead works away from it to find the invisible, to unravel the unknown. The artist does not become because or despite the categorizations of the art world, but rather through his work, his art. The lost artist becomes “through a development of getting lost as a way of knowing” (Lather 4).

Instead of viewing the painter from its social and economic position in the art world, I would like to turn it around and view the painter from the place where he becomes a painter, in relation to the painting. The painter is the one who “make visible a kind of original unity of the senses, and would make a multisensible Figure appear visually” (Deleuze 42). The ‘Figure’, for Deleuze, is the embodiment of ‘hysteria’ and he argues that painting as a ‘Figure’ is a form of hysteria. Hysteria, for Deleuze, is the ambivalent nature of the world, a body without organs. The body without organs is the entanglement of everything, an all-encompassing universal non-organism that produces the world. It consists of everything and connects to everything; it is the very overabundance of substance on which our reality is based. The overabundance of the body without organs that is triggering our senses is the hysteria Deleuze is referring to. It is the overextension of the senses that try to pierce through the human-constructed layers of reality to make sense out of non-sense. The body without organs in all its vibrance is what the painter tries to make sense of in his painting. The universe is seen by the ‘eye’ of the painter, it “becomes virtually the polyvalent indeterminate organ that sees the body without organs (the Figure) as a pure presence” (Deleuze 52). The painter, to create his painting, has to see the unseen, the hysteria, and try to capture it within the painting. If the painter achieves this, the “painting directly attempts to release the presences beneath representation, beyond representation” (Deleuze 52). Deleuze explains; “painting, in short, discovers the material reality of bodies with its line—color systems and its polyvalent organ, the eye” (Deleuze 55).

The painter who is wielding his brush, thus, creates a connection with the unseen, using his intuition to guide him through the layers of cliché and predictability. Intuition serves as his compass towards the planes of the unseen. The unseen is where the painter needs to get lost to, to be able to touch upon the body without organs in an effort to bring the intensity affect to quality affect. Erin Manning argues that “art can move you toward these planes of duration, making them intuitively felt such that a quality of existence is momentarily touched upon” (Manning *Pragmatics* 105). She does not refer to the observation of art, but rather to its immersive participation in the world. Only through actively working towards the creation of the painting can its ineffability be felt. Once it has shown itself and is made visible, it dissipates and joins the categories of the known. Manning states that “the infrathin must every time be activated anew; it cannot be reproduced, once and for all” (Manning *Pragmatics* 105). Therefore, the painter has to reinvent himself on all occasions, being a painter is not a status but a state. A painter cannot put his feet up upon arrival, as his ‘arrival’ will dislocate his location. The invisible is an endless horizon, ever pushed forward by the exploring painter, leaving the visible in his wake.

The painter, therefore, cannot sit still and instead has to get lost towards the unseen horizon perpetually. Physically, mentally, and intuitively, using his senses, and all that is available to him to seek connection, through the infrathin, with the body without organs and the intensity affect it radiates. “To affect and to be affected” the painter needs “to be open to the world, to be active in it and to be patient for its return activity” (Masumi *Polity* ix). The periphery of the known is the painter’s hunting grounds, it is where he finds and connects the unknown to the known. It is how the known is getting contested and reviewed, “it is the cutting edge of change” (Masumi *Polity* ix). The painter reevaluates the boundaries of the known in search of that which we might have missed. It is through this reevaluation of measurements that “the boundaries and properties of “components” of phenomena become determinate and that particular articulations become meaningful” (Barad 148). The painter, through his painting, respecifies the way the boundaries of meaning flow and relocates it to new meaning. This search for meaning is an ongoing activity that does not end. The body without organs is not fixed or static; its “intelligibility is an ontological performance of the world in its ongoing articulation” (Barad 149). The painter, in this respect, is not a fixed concept either.

The painter cannot be bound to a determining categorization for the mere fact he needs to always move out of it, escaping his epistemological being, in the act for his perpetual ontological becoming. The moment the painter stops and gets fixed in the known, he is, instead of becomes. He freezes into his categorization, shackled by the boundaries he just created. The painter does not get lost, as Abbing is suggesting, for the “love of exclusivity” (Abbing *Changing* 117). The painter is the explorer for the articulation of the painting, through the activity of painting inviting in the unknown intensity affect. He is forever lost in the margins of the known, looking to make visible the invisible. The painter explores futures, looking for affect “as a way of talking about that margin of manoeuvrability, the ‘where we might be able to go and what we might be able to do’ in every present situation” (Masumi *Polity* 3).

To conclude, the painter does not fit into any categorization per se. He should, once determined, evade any categorization immediately. He should get lost within the peripheries of the known. The painter should become a lost artist. The lost artist is not a categorization or position; the lost artist is a state of being, a modality of becoming, a doing. The lost-artist constitutes the human side of the relational bridge to understanding our humanity among materiality. The lost artist is part of the modality how the relational dynamics between the painter and the painting constitute meaning. In the next section, I will further explore how the painter and painting, as co-constituents of each other, articulate meaning in their assemblage.

2.3. *The Painter/Painting Assemblage*

In order to explore how meaning articulates from the painter and the painting, they have to be addressed in their assemblage. What is a painting without a painter; the painter without a painting? It is a bit of a 'chicken and the egg' situation, which comes first? One does not precede the other; they become in unison and push each other into existence. One cannot do without the other, and they are forever related to each other, bonded, entwined and entangled. The entanglement of things in the body without organs Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the rhizome. They remind us that we only can see things in the middle (Deleuze and Guattari 23). They explain that "it's not easy to see things in the middle, rather than looking down on them from above or up at them from below, or from left to right or right to left: try it, you'll see that everything changes" (Deleuze and Guattari 23). From the middle, things get up close and personal; it reveals the flows of affect that intertwine. It forgoes on determinism and categorization because things are always moving. Whenever things move everything in the rhizome moves with it. An assemblage in the rhizome "has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo" (Deleuze and Guattari 25). A thing, painter or painting, therefore, cannot be known in itself, it is always a constituent of the whole. It is not the painter and the painting themselves that are the important sites of exploration, instead, it is the vortex of moving flows of affect that move in between and reveal them. Deleuze and Guattari explain that "between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle" (Deleuze and Guattari 25).

Deleuze and Guattari write about the book as an assemblage and state that "there is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author)" (Deleuze and Guattari 23). The same is applicable then for the world, the painting, and the painter. The Painter/Painting assemblage, "in its multiplicity, necessarily acts on semiotic flows, material flows, and social flows simultaneously" (Deleuze and Guattari 23). The world would be represented in material flows, the painting in representational semiotic flows, and the painter in subjective social flows. Within the rhizomatic body without organs, this would never be this clean-cut and organized; the flows would cross borders and boundaries wherever we can see them. The assemblage articulates the painter and the painting on either side because I have put them there for the purpose of this thesis, to make sense of them. In fact, they are not in a position anywhere, and these positions are best forgotten once this thesis is read. The Painter/Painting assemblage is put into a straight jacket for the

purpose of intelligibility and meaning-making. It culminated, in this thesis, “in a language stratum ... tending to strip it of any form of its own (the imperialism of language, the pretensions to a general semiology)” (Deleuze and Guattari 587). I referred to this before, when I said it is silly to try to explain a painting. The painter/painting assemblage has its own unique semiotic modality that evades language and functions on different senses. I will address the semiotic modality of the assemblage in the Meaningless Meaning section of this theoretical chapter.

For now, I want to turn to the intra-activity Barad discusses, as this can give insight into how the assemblage is relationally entangled and performs its articulation in our human reality. Barad argues that “knowing is not a bounded or closed practice but an ongoing performance of the world” (Barad 149). “Knowing”, Barad states, “is a matter of intra-acting” (Barad 149). She argues that everything is causally related within the agential real (Barad 139). The agential real can be considered to be a similar concept as Deleuze’s body without organs. The agential real is the substance in which materiality is articulated, the fabric of spacetime as Barad puts it. “The analysis of entangled practices” Barad states, “requires a nonadditive approach that is attentive to the intra-action of multiple apparatuses of bodily production” (Barad 94). The bodies of production are generated through intra-relational measurements by apparatuses that entangle with the human. Barad draws upon quantum physics in her ontological theory and proposes that the double-slit experiment can be seen as proof that matter intra-acts with the human. In the double-slit experiment, an electron is sent through two slits creating two waves that combine in an interference pattern. The remarkable thing is that “if a measurement is made that identifies the electron as a particle, ..., then the result will be a particle pattern” (Barad 104). The electron is essentially transformed in a wavelength, and when the interference pattern is measured, the wavelength collapses into a particle. The particle that splits up through the two slits can concurrently be measured on both ends of the spectrum of the interference wave, suggesting the particle is in both places at once (Barad 102-106). This is why Barad argues that the measurement creates matter, “which matters to the ongoing materialization of the world in its intra-active becoming” (Barad 180).

The measuring is performed by apparatuses; these are not your typical laboratory devices but can be found behind any articulation of matter. They can be any force that affects a measurement; humans, non-human, nature, or technology. The measurement signals the intra-action among forces that Barad refers to as phenomena. Within this phenomenon, an agential-cut happens that makes one thing from the other intelligible. Barad specifies that “the agential cut enacts a causal structure among components of a phenomenon in the marking of the “measuring agencies” (“effect”) by the “measured object”

("cause")" (Barad 140). Things are continually intra-acting to produce and articulate our world, our agential real. Barad summarizes the apparatus as follows:

(1) apparatuses are specific material-discursive practices (they are not merely laboratory setups that embody human concepts and take measurements); (2) apparatuses produce differences that matter-they are boundary-making practices that are formative of matter and meaning, productive of, and part of, the phenomena produced; (3) apparatuses are material configurations / dynamic reconfigurings of the world; (4) apparatuses are themselves phenomena (constituted and dynamically reconstituted as part of the ongoing intra-activity of the world) ; (5) apparatuses have no intrinsic boundaries but are open-ended practices ; and (6) apparatuses are not located in the world but are material configurations or reconfigurings of the world that re(con)figure spatiality and temporality as well as (the traditional notion of) dynamics (i.e., they do not exist as static structures, nor do they merely unfold or evolve in space and time). (Barad 146)

The painter/painting assemblage can be seen in a similar way, both as Barad's ontological agential realism and as the physical manifestation that the assemblage produces. The painter intra-acts with the painting by the medium of paint. The paint starts as an amorphous goo on a pallet and starts to articulate once it intra-acts with the painter's brush. The piles of amorphous goo get mixed to create another more specific goo, of which its colour, viscosity and substance is measured by the painter/painting assemblage and is applied to the canvas. There is always an intra-action among the painter and the painting that decides what colour, viscosity, or substance, is the exact right one. It is not only informed by the painter, but also by the painting. There is this precise paint, in the precise spot, that the painting is just 'asking' for. There is only that one specific type of paint that makes the painting, the exact painting it concurrently becomes. The painting is built up with every stroke. With each next stroke, the already applied paint is offset and forced into a new light, becoming something different, but also, at the same time, staying the same. Territorialized and deterritorialized, being particle and wave. In this way, the canvas is pushed through time, agentially-cut with every brushstroke that is applied. The assemblage becomes the apparatus that measures the articulation of the painting; it forces meaningless goo to material-mattering, with the human at one end, matter at the other. The intra-action of the painter/painting assemblage has only one goal, the creation of new meaning. This meaning only manifest when the affects of the painter/painting assemblage flow through time to into a painting-event.

2.4. *The Painting-Event*

In this section I will discuss in what way the painter/painting assemblage is perpetuated through time and how it creates meaning by differentiation. The flow of events, according to Deleuze and Guattari, consist of semiotic, material and social flows (Deleuze and Guattari 23). In their book *The Thousand Plateaus* they do not determine these different flows precisely. Taguchi states that the assemblage is made up out of a “multitude of material, semiotic(discursive) and social desiring forces” (Taguchi 211). There is no concrete definition to find how these flows are determined and what they entail. This lack of definition, of course, is precisely what New Materialism aims for, as they should not and cannot be territorialized into static assumptions. The question arises, what might these flows of affect be from a painting/painter assemblage perspective?

Taguchi explains that “breaking out of the territorializing hierarchizing and normalizing strata” of the body without organs “is no easy process, but rather a sometimes dangerous swinging between stagnated and normalizing practices, and dangerous leaps of escape into unknown destratified territories” (Tachuchi 212). These swinging flows that de/territorialize events within the painter/painting assemblage I would like to refer to as the ‘painting-event’. The painting-event is the accumulation of articulation of the semiotic, material and social flows of affect in the painting/painting assemblage. It is the semiotic flows that embody meaning in the painting-event, the material flows of the paint, brushes, canvas, mediums and other adhesives that entangle with the materiality of the human to create the physical body of matter to this meaning, and the social flows that are a reflection to the social structure that is articulating its temporal topology, projecting meaning into the social sphere becoming polity – something the human has to deal with.

Time is an essential aspect of these flows to become dynamic. ‘Becoming dynamic’ here is a pleonasm as the act of becoming is always already dynamic. This dynamism is precisely what excites the flows, and the reason why it is becoming in the first place. It is the dynamic vitality of the flows that are captured in time “as vibrant, vital, energetic, lively, quivering, vibratory, evanescent, and effluence” (Bennett 112). These “dynamics are a matter not merely of properties changing in time but of what matters in the ongoing materializing of different spacetime topologies” (Barad 141). That is to say, that through spacetime the flows of affect in the painting-event materialize into topologies, becoming the territorialization of the painter/painting body. In this territorialization “space, time, and matter are intra-actively produced in the ongoing differential articulation” (Barad 234). The process of capturing, or measuring, the flows of affect within the painter/painting assemblage through time is where the

articulation takes place. At the same time, time happens in its articulation, as Dolphijn and van der Tuin remind us that “just like position, momentum, wave and particle, time itself only makes sense in the context of particular phenomena” (Dolphijn and van der Tuin 66). When moving from one de/territorialization to another time becomes in-between, it is an iterated happening of doing.

In her book *The Minor Gesture* Erin Manning argues for ‘the art of time’, in which she addresses the feeling and experiencing of the artwork. Manning states that art is “the intuitive potential to activate the future, to make the middling of experience felt where futurity and presentness coincide, to invoke the memory not of what was, but of what will be” (Manning *Gesture* 47). She argues that the event is a mobilization of experience, a materialization in event-time, signaling our intuition which creates the perception of becoming. This event-time occurs in the “periphery of time itself, and is experienced, in its poorest state, as memory, out of movement” (Manning *Gesture* 47). The ‘object’ for Manning is an edging into experience, we cannot experience it in its fullness and instead “the ‘object’ has to be conceived as out of time, relegated beyond experience” (Manning *Gesture* 47). Manning goes on to explain that the experience of the object is never finite, it is ‘more-than’, and never contained by the dimensions of the object or subject itself. It is the acting of an object through time that creates their being. The events expressing in time, Manning argues, is the fabric of spacetime, what she calls ‘the art of time’.

The art of time makes this more-than of the object felt, and it does so by activating the differential of time in the making, the difference between what was and what will be. For all actualization is in fact differentiation. The in-act is the dephasing of the process toward the coming into itself of an occasion of experience. In this dephasing, the differences in kind between the not-yet and the will-have-been are felt, but only at the edges of experience. They are felt in the moving, activating the more-than. (Manning *Gesture* 48)

The events in time are always fleeting and they cannot be grasped, the capture is a mere memory of the edging of events into time, leading to an experience of time in matter. Manning offers intuition as the precursor to experience, a signifier for events that happen in the art of time. The events evoke the intuitive senses to the vitalism of materiality and create an experience; the objectification of that experience is just an afterthought of the art of time. The painting-event is a fleeting event in the art of time, it is a vehicle for the “intuition of forces, of qualities that escape the superficial interrogation of that which has already taken its place” (Manning *Gesture* 50). For Manning “the signs of art do not convey meaning, they make felt its ineffability” (Manning *Gesture* 50). Therefore, the painting-event cannot be determined or explained in a meaningful manner because the intelligibility of its meaning concurrently

deconstructs its amorph, vital, and ambiguous state. It is not the aim to know the painting-event, but rather to accept the unknown it articulates. The painting-event is “where movement always predates form, where expression remains lively at the interstices of the ineffable, the field of relation itself becomes “inventor of new possibilities of life, possibilities of life we can only intuit in the art of time” (Manning *Gesture* 53).

To recall the introduction, it is not “the love of exclusivity that is an important motor behind the exclusion”, like Abbing suggests (Abbing *Changing* 149). Art, the painting, the painter/painting assemblage, and the painting-event, can not only be regulated to a Marxist fetish commodity to be possessed and valued, they are also the topological spacetime phenomena, territorializing flows of affect, leading to the ineffable articulation of the unknown. Therefore, it is not the symptomatic commodification of anthropocentrism that is a motor for exclusion. However, instead, the exclusion is the precursor in the search for movement, change and the inclusivity of life and its vitality. The painting-event becomes as the inventor of new possibilities of life, the ‘bridge’ on which the unknown seeps into the social consciousness, articulated on the different flows of affect “permeated by unformed, unstable matters, by flows in all directions, by free intensities or nomadic singularities, by mad or transitory particles” (Deleuze and Guattari 40). It is then a question of how these unstable flows collapse to territorialized meaning.

2.4.1. *Meaningless Meaning & Mattering Matter*

To examine how meaning articulates itself in the painting-event an idea has to be formed first about how meaning acts, how semiology works. In his book, *Doing Cultural Theory* (2012) Walton states that Saussure was the founder of semiology, which is the study of signs within a code (Walton 29). Walton explains further that “for Saussure, signs are made up of two parts: the signifiers and the signified” (Walton 27). “The signifier is the *form* of the sign”, made up of symbols like written and spoken words, “that Saussure called ‘sound-images’, the signified is the *concept* (or meaning) that is understood as resulting from the particular form” (Walton 27). Walton goes on to explain that signs are relational. He explains that signs do not depend on their reference to the actual thing but on their relation to other terms (Walton 29). Walton gives an example of a pig. He states that a pig is a pig because it is not a horse, house or screwdriver or any other thing (Walton 27). Only by understanding other concepts can the sign of the pig be filled with meaning. The understanding of the signified concepts in this way is “purely differential and not defined by their positive content but negatively by their relations with the other terms of the system. Their most precise characteristic is being what others are not” (Walton 29). This shows that the meaning of the thing

itself is actually void. Only by understanding every positive thing can we truly know the scope of the meaning of a negative thing, with the only problem that all the 'positive' things are constituted similarly and are negative themselves. It is the dividing boundaries in the relational syntax system, in between the concepts, that gives meaning to one and the other.

Semiotic flows of affect can be seen as the forces that signify these meanings into our world. They do not address language by itself, as a signifier, but instead give articulation to the concept of the signified. These signified in relation to the human concurrently produce a signifier, the human points and names the concept, thereby subjecting its form. Deleuze and Guattari state that:

The linguistic relation between the signifier and signified has, of course, been conceived in many different ways. It has been said that they are arbitrary; that they are as necessary to each other as the two sides of the same leaf; that they correspond term by term, or else globally; and that they are so ambivalent as to be indistinguishable. In any event, the signified is thought not to exist outside of its relationship with signifier, and the ultimate signified is the very existence of the signifier, extrapolated beyond the sign. There is only one thing that can be said about the signifier: it is Redundancy, it is the Redundant. (Deleuze and Guattari 66)

The signifier, Deleuze and Guattari argue, is a mere descriptor of the meaning behind it, not the meaning itself. Barad voices a similar argument that "meaning is not a property of individual words or groups of words but an ongoing performance of the world in its differential dance of intelligibility and unintelligibility" (Barad 149). That is to say that words do not have meaning by themselves; they are constituted to the concepts that they signify. They point toward a concept that gives the words meaning. In this way, language acts as a signifier to an already articulated concept of meaning in materiality. It is the performance of matter that articulates meaning, not the performance of language, as "the primary semantic units are not "words" but material-discursive practices through which (ontic and semantic) boundaries are constituted" (Barad 141). To put simply, it is not what things say; it is what things do that differs the boundaries of meaning.

The painting-event articulates meaning through material-discursive practices. It is through the articulation of matter in the painting-event that the painting gives rise to new meaning in its materiality. The painting does not become a referential signifier to a concept, but it becomes a signified concept of meaning by itself. By the de/territorializing pendulum the painting-event shifts through the semiotic flows of affect towards its own signified concept that lacks a signifier. The painter intuitively grasps the meaning and content of the work but cannot give another signifier to it than that of the painting itself. The painting-

event becomes its own thing. It articulates matter rather than language and produces a material signified instead of a referring signifier. This is the difference between the cliché which refers to already existing things, and a 'real' painting which reveals the invisible, as Deleuze refers to in his writings. A difference between creation and recreation. The reveal of the invisible forces becomes more apparent in an abstract painting but is present in obscured figurative painting as well. Through the swinging of the pendulum, the quality and the intensity affect start to separate in the painting-event. It is the infra-thin, "that marks the rhythm that is the oscillation between what is perceptible and what is imperceptible yet felt, in the event" (Manning *Pragmatics* 101). The narrative of the quality affect disappears and gives space to the unprocessed chaotic state of bodily happening of the intensity affect. In other words, the painting is not a referential form to meaning but, if done right, embodies mattering meaning itself.

Through the different modes of articulation the painting-event operates as an amorphous figure that adapts to the viewer. The painting-event becomes the signified for a range of polyvalent signifiers, "also known as the measurement problem, which refers to the changes that the act of observing produces on a phenomenon, and which has demonstrated the inextricable relation between the subject and the object, as well as the dynamic and pluralistic nature/culture of matter" (Ferrando 122). It has no static signifier in language that is precomposed to meaning but instead acts as a soundboard, luring the viewer's perception towards new territories of meaning. Due to the lack of a signifier the painting needs to be solved in the syntax of the known. It becomes a void into the understanding of the viewer now confronted with unknown mattering meaning. The viewer has to make sense out of it to make sense out of their perception of the other constituted sites of meaning. In this way, the painting-event undermines the boundaries of meaning by voiding the structures of understanding. It throws a wrench into the spokes of understanding, by creating a void that needs to be resolved before all other signification can be laid to rest. By introducing the unknown, the painting-event, thus, gives rise to new meaning by voiding its syntax.

The articulation of new meaning is the matter of differing. Something has to differ itself from another to be its own thing; otherwise, it would surely be the same. Manning argues that "it is out of relation that the solitary is crafted, not the other way around: relation is what an object, a subject is made of" (Manning *Gesture* 51). This process of relational differing lays at the core of the articulation of meaning. Barad states that "difference patterns do not merely change in time and space; spacetime is an enactment of differentness, a way of making/marking here and now" (Barad 126). Through the experience of the differing forces, we get to know the world. Our world, therefore, is not constituted out of static

concepts like facts and categorizations of “indifferentiation, but the vital energy of virtual ways and modes of becoming: positive alterity as complexity (Braidotti *Nomadic* 119).

The process of relation differing does not just pertain to the differing within the scope of human pragmatics or use-value. Differing forces do not have to be useful, or have value, to be different. Pragmatics is not a prerequisite for meaning; pragmatics is an adaptation of meaning; the instrumentalization of meaning. Meaning in the painting-event does not have to be useful from an anthropocentric point of view. The value of the painting-event “does not reside in the form, but in the infrathin of form’s incompletion” (Manning *Pragmatics* 113). It is “beyond use-value, the valuation not of what is given, but the capacity of transvaluation to perform a shift at the very heart of the process’s incompletion, of the process’s inherent indeterminacy” (Manning *Pragmatic* 103). The incompletion of the painting-event, lacking its signifier, invites a resolve for its meaning. It is concurrently a matter how it is measured where meaning arises. Meaning-making as subjectification, therefore, becomes a human-centred activity in our intra-action with the painting-event. Meaning tends to articulate where there is understanding. It is “through our advances” that “we participate in bringing forth the world in its specificity, including ourselves” (Barad 355). The painting-event, in this sense, performs a feedback loop upon the syntax of the known, contesting its structures.

The painting-event is not the painterly object we find in our company within our temporal isolation, at the moment. It is spread out through time and space as an articulation of forces. Its materiality and semiotic meaning as a signified are a mere result of its measured refracting and differing forces that reveal themselves to us. Manning argues that what is revealed is just the tip of the iceberg when she states the following;

The refraction produces not a third object but a quality of experience that reaches the edgings into form of the material’s intuition. When this occurs, matter intuitively its relational movement, activating from within its qualitative resonance an event that makes time for that which cannot quite be seen but is felt in all its uncanny difference. Intuition, in its amplification of the technicity of a process, in its capacity to think the more-than as memory of the future, forecasts what Deleuze calls “an original time” which “surmounts its series and its dimensions,” a “complicated time” “deployed and developed,” a time devoid of preconceptions, a time that makes its own way (1972: 61). (Manning *Gesture* 51)

The painting-event produces itself iteratively through time; a snapshot is perceived in every moment. These snapshots are a reference to the outdated memory, they “are the shadows of things, their

echo, thrown into the past from an impossible futurity” (Grusin 184). The accumulation of all those snapshots is an array of articulations that give shape to the painting-body in the event. The painting-event does not result in the materialization of the painted object that is presented in the museum or gallery. Instead, the different materializations through time are collectively the painting-event regardless of their location or physicality. It is not the physicality of the painting-event that is its mattering materiality, but it is its content underneath, its substance, that articulates its physicality.

The painting-event cannot be limited to its articulated physicality; this is the mere façade/figure on the surface of its body. Every moment in the painting-event is an edging of it into spacetime and an event in its own right. An example, think of the three-dimensional sphere moving through the two-dimensional space of Edwin A. Abbott’s *Flatland*. It leaves only a two-dimensional figure on the plane for the flatlanders to see. What is visible is a mere slice of its volume, the figure to its body. It is only upon intra-action of the two-dimensional plane with the three-dimensional object that the sphere becomes knowledgeable to the Flatlanders in two-dimensional space. These “intra-actions enact specific boundaries, marking the domains of interiority and exteriority, differentiating the intelligible from the unintelligible, the determinate from the indeterminate” (Barad 181). From the perspective of the Flatlanders, it is insurmountable what they cannot see, on the two-dimensional plane, the flatlanders only see a line growing and shrinking (Figure 1). They can only hope to understand the body of the sphere through the glimpses they experience. The painting-event articulates itself in a similar mode, as Manning reminds us that, “in the event, we know the object not in its fullness, in its ultimate form, but as an edging into experience” (Manning *Gesture* 48).

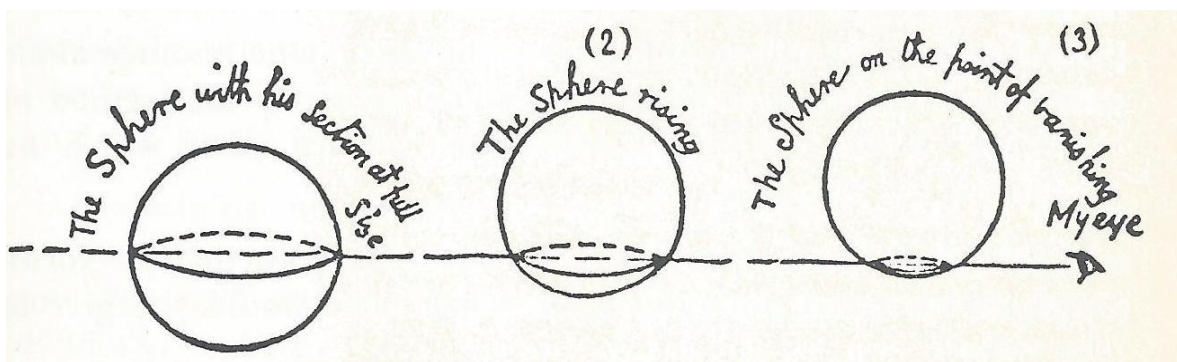


Figure 1: Perspective of the Flatlanders of the body of a sphere. (Abbot 88)

The faces that the painting-event articulates through time all revolve around the same body in an exploration of the infrathin. What is concrete and what is abstract becomes contested in a way that it is impossible to fairly differ one from the other within the painting-event. Knowing and the intelligibility of the painting-event are essentially an anthropocentric action of pragmatic meaning-making, a so-called

operational definition, and is more telling of the viewers perspective than the body it tries to signify. The painting-event itself articulates from a more in-depth mode that functions underneath the anthropocentric pragmatics of meaning-making as a precursor that distributes material and semiotic articulation, a pure matter-function Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the 'abstract machine';

The abstract machine in itself is destratified, deterritorialized; it has no form of its own (much less substance) and makes no distinction within itself between content and expression, even though outside itself it presides over that distinction and distributes it in strata, domains, and territories. An abstract machine in itself is not physical or corporeal, any more than it is semiotic; it is diagrammatic (it knows nothing of the distinction between the artificial and the natural either). It operates by matter, not by substance; by function, not by form. Substances and forms are of expression "or" of content. But functions are not yet "semiotically" formed, and matters are not yet "physically" formed. The abstract machine is pure Matter-Function—a diagram independent of the forms and substances, expressions and contents it will distribute. (Deleuze and Guattari 587)

That is to say, that the painting-event does not revolve around the application of material or semiotics signs. However, it touches upon a more profound intuition that gives rise to the unknown underneath which, in turn, produces mattering and signs. Without the syntax of the known "independent objects are abstract notions" (Dolphijn and van der Tuin 61). The painting-event, in this sense, acts as a face to the invisible figure of its body. It articulates the exploration of the unknown, the infrathin, trying to find a way to make it visible, with each glance, each movement, each stroke, each moment, and each event. "It is precisely because the face" of the painting-event "depends on an abstract machine that it does not assume a preexistent subject or signifier; but it is subjacent to them and provides the substance necessary to them" (Deleuze and Guattari 180). This polyvalent and ambiguous mode of the painting-event makes it a powerful catalyst in the distribution of the meaning-making syntax of the known. It invites the movement to new de/territorializations and acts like a void, a vacuum, for the mattering matter to distribute in.

The painting-event will be explored further in the case study where it will be discussed in what manners Peter Geerts intra-acts with his paintings and in what ways they articulate meaning on those events. For now, I would like to finish this theoretical framework with a section on the social flows of affect, the binding boundaries of the painting-event.

2.4.2. *Binding Boundaries*

The anthropocentric appropriation and the pragmatic application of the mattering meaning stalls the becoming of the painting-event. It shifts the attention from an iterative vitalism to a value-centred stalemate. The painting-event gets captured and bound in these social flows of society of which it may not escape. The subjectification of the painting-event will first need to be assigned a validating category to measure its value and use. The painting gets flipped and transformed from a mattering performance of the articulation of spacetime into a human-centred event of appropriation. The painting-event stops being the point of departure, and it gets appropriated to policies other than its own. The exploration of the invisibility of the unknown is being relegated into a 'seen of the known'.

The appropriation of the painting-event is the death of its creation, possibility and vitality. It is not per se the painting-event that transforms into a new 'thing'. It gets bound in between pragmatic appropriations, bouncing from the memory of the art of time, to the social forces that have captured the memory of the painting-event. Not entirely the original, not quite something new. It becomes a reduction that mirrors the dominating preconceived notions—an affirming soundboard to anthropocentric familiarity. The social flows relegate the painting-event to fit within a boxed system, safely familiar and explained. It becomes territorialized as a means of escape from the unknown, as a flight from polyvalent uncertainty. The painting-event intra-acts with the social flows of affect, and this introduces a power imbalance that forces the painting-event towards a 'spectator-event' - an event that does not take the articulation of matter as the source of meaning but projects an anthropocentric articulation upon it.

The painting-event gets bound in an anthropocentric social flow "that is propelled by the mobility of goods, data, and finances for the sake of profit and commodification" (Braidotti *Nomadic* 17). It is the consecration of the painting-event that folds it back up to a mere painting again, an object, an artefact, a commodity. "Just as there are no words with determinate meanings lying in wait as so many candidates for an appropriate representational moment, neither are there things with determinate boundaries and properties whirling aimlessly in the void, bereft of agency, historicity, or meaning, which are only to be bestowed from the outside, as when the agency of Man pronounces the name that attaches to specific beings in the making of word-thing pairs." (Barad 150) That is to say, for the painting-event to become intelligible, it has to be relegated towards a communicable object for the use in human-to-human contact. The word-thing pair attaches a signifier and concept to the painting-event obscuring its mattering signified state further and "fulfils a mirror function that confirms" the "socially supported systems of dominant values" (Braidotti 29).

The dominant values render the painting-event into submission, “it is much more a stopping point, a reordering that prevents decoded semiotic flows ... from escaping in all directions.” (Deleuze and Guattari 461). “They prevent conjunctions of flight from forming and crush the cutting edges of deterritorialization, either by effecting reterritorializations that make these movements merely relative, or by assigning certain of the lines an entirely negative value, or again by segmenting them, blocking them, plugging them, or plunging them into a kind of black hole.” (Deleuze and Guattari 587) It stops the painting-event from differing into new territories, intra-acting with new topologies, thereby losing its articulation. The lack of articulation in the painting-event generates a “distinct absence of a qualitative shift of perspectives that may alter the rules of the game and challenge the master code, that is to say, the dominant axiom (Braidotti *Nomadic* 17). This smokescreen of anthropocentric appropriation is why it is important to “‘return to the sources’ which is the basis of all heretical subversion and all aesthetic revolutions because it enables the insurgents to turn against the establishment the arms which they use to justify their domination” (Bourdieu 84). These sources are not located in the operational human social flows of affect, but are born in the mattering articulations of the semiotic flows of the unknown. The exploration of the mattering unknown, “more than all else, depends on the human getting out of the way” (Manning *Gesture* 63).

The meaningless meaning, mattering matter, and binding boundaries all work together in the painting-event. The semiotic, material, and social flows intra-act between the painter and painting and constitute the movement through time in the event. The flows of affect in the painting-event articulate the becoming of the unknown and create a bridge that connects the painter to the painting, the human to the non-human. The painting-event acts as a measuring apparatus that articulates a face to the unknown body without organs. It explores our human relation in materiality. How the painter and painting intra-act will be addressed further in the case study, first I will address the application of these theories in the methodology chapter.

3. Methodology

3.1. *Research-Assemblage*

To explore what flows of events give articulation to the painting-event in a more open and rhizo-analytical manner, I will be using some tangents in this thesis to introduce an intra-relational mode of thinking that challenges the traditional ways of theoretical methods. This approach will open up the research to ontological meaning-making and open the door to let the unknown in. Although this invites a slippery slope into the phantasmal, the New Materialist nature of this thesis asks for a methodology that treads off the beaten path. To be quite frank, the openness that New Materialist research applies draws upon the unknown in such a manner that it is hard to lock down a preconceived methodology at all. A preconceived methodology and research question biases the search for knowledge into a framework not to differ one from the other, but to compare and articulate a result immanent of the methodology. One must be aware of what is being measured and articulated. By measuring, the research object and the method of measurement are constituted, they are both co-constituents of the knowledge that is articulated in between.

Manning addresses the anthropocentric uneasiness of knowledge and thought in her book *The Minor Gesture* (2016). She states that in regard to thought, “it will be necessary to reorient it to the relational field of the occasion, refraining from delimiting it to predominant notions of intellectuality which tend to place thought squarely within the linguistic limits of intelligibility” (Manning *Gesture* 27). She implores for artistic-research and experimentation and argues it “creates the conditions for new ways of encountering study—forms and forces of intellectuality that cut across normative accounts of what it means to know.” (Manning *Gesture* 27). She continues that “it will also be necessary to undo thought of its dependence on the human subject. This will mean opening thought toward the movement of thought, engaging it at the immanent limit, where it is still fully in the act” (Manning *Gesture* 28). Manning argues for an open attitude to research that invites new meaning through use of alternative methods. She advocates that the method should result from the research-object in its exploration, rather than a preconceived framework to see how the research-object measures up to it, inherently making the research-object an expression of the method, rather than from itself. Manning argues that “knowledge tends to be relegated to the sphere of “conscious knowledge”, backgrounding the wealth of the relational field of experience in-forming; the force of change that animates a process is deadened; the uneasiness that destabilizes thinking is backgrounded or effaced completely” (Manning *Gesture* 32). Therefore, she calls for an open-ended methodology that gives space for the object of research to articulate itself, instead of refraining it to a methodology. Manning states that “a process must determine its own reason. Any

attempt to chart in advance the interplay between the anarchic fullness of experience welling and the cut of actualization into determinateness of an event's coming to-be, stems the potential for difference" (Manning *Gesture* 34).

To navigate the arguments Manning makes about methodology I will make an effort to utilize the New Materialist theories in an open-ended fashion. It is important not to constrict the preconceived ideas of the theory and methodology to the object of research. To do this, I will gather my data without injecting the theory upon it. I will collect the data from a zero point and let it grow from there. This means I will visit the studio of the painter Peter Geerts and document his intra-actions with the paintings he is working on, and go from there. Only after I have conducted the data collection I will relate it to the theory and see how the painting-event articulates. To give some more structure to the methodology, I will make use of the methods described by Nick J. Fox and Pam Alldred in their book *Sociology and the New Materialism* (2017). Their methodology stems from New Materialist theory and compliments its open-ended thinking patterns. For the pragmatics of this thesis and to construct meaning that is intelligible and hopefully previously unknown, I will utilize the methodology they supply in an open-ended fashion. That is to say I will try to let the painting-event speak for itself.

Fox and Alldred list three key reasons why the New Materialism offers opportunities for sociology. First is the emphasis that New Materialism places upon ontology (concern with the kinds of things that exist) rather than epistemology (which addresses how they can be known by an observer). Second, while there is some divergence across the new materialist terrain, the distinctive ontology advocated by New Materialist scholars has been described as 'flat' or 'monist' (as opposed to 'dualist'), rejecting differences between 'natural' and 'cultural' realms, human and non-human, 'base' and 'superstructure', micro and macro, and perhaps most significantly for sociology, mind, and matter. Thirdly, the turn to matter offers a re-immersion in the materiality of life and struggle. It is a recognition that in a monist world – because there is no 'other level' that makes things do what they do – everything is necessarily relational and contextual rather than essential and absolute (Fox and Alldred 7-8).

In their third chapter Fox and Alldred give a comprehensive explanation on how to utilize New Materialism for research. They summarize the fundamental principle to establish a materialist methodology;

- ❖ an ontological orientation towards matter (as opposed to textuality or structures);
- ❖ a concern with what matter does, not what it is;
- ❖ a post-anthropocentric focus on the capacity of all matter (not just human bodies) to affect;

- ❖ acknowledgement that thoughts, memories, desires, and emotions have material effects;
- ❖ power (and resistance to it) operates at the very local level of actions and events, rather than top-down; and
- ❖ sociology is itself part of the materiality of the social world. (Fox and Alldred 153)

They argue for the use of a research-assembly that “will comprise a multiplicity of constituent (affective) relations between the ‘events’ to be researched” (Fox and Alldred 155). These research-assemblies can be utilized to reveal the flows of affect that occur within it. These flows of affect can be researched using three types of ‘machines’, the Data-collection machine, the Data-analysis machine, and a Reporting machine (Fox and Alldred 156). These three machines can be connected in different manners to create a research-assembly. Because there is no other level, all machines and their contents are part of the same body, including me as a researcher and any other relational aspect that connects to the research-assembly. There are no dividing borders between one and the other. They are all part of the whole that relationally affect each other to produce the knowledge articulated in the research-event.

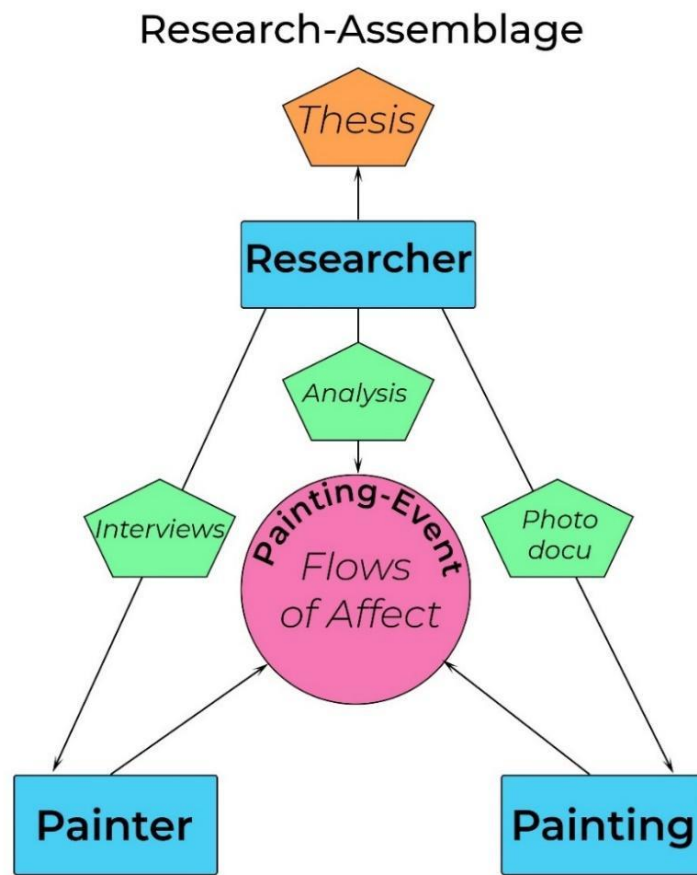


Figure 2: The Research-Assemblage Apparatus.

This open approach creates endless possible configurations of assembly, and closing a side off would skew the results into a preliminary bias. To concentrate my efforts and this research, I will focus on the events between a painter and the creation of one painting. To thoroughly explore the experimental concepts that this thesis mobilizes, I will focus on one case study, one painter and the paintings he is interacting with. I will exclude third-party affects, like the origin of the materiality of the painters' tools and the greater social flows of the cultural field of production. This thesis solely focuses on the relations between the painter and the painting. The research-assembly, therefore, will start simple and, in the process, grow with the research itself. The research-assemblage will be composed as a triangle with on one side the painter, on the other side the painting, and on the last, me as the researcher. In the middle of these co-constituents, in the centre, will be the painting-event (Figure 2). The purpose of this thesis is to disentangle the events that unfold in between, or more accurate among, the three. To do this, I will use interviews and photo documentation as the data-collection machines, these will be then analyzed making the researcher the analyzing-machine, and lastly this thesis will be the reporting-machine.

To document the data I will on the one hand interview the painter (Appendix 1) and on the other photograph the painting (Appendix 2-5). I will interview the painter weekly about the process of the creation of the painting. These interviews will be open and will follow the painter through the entire creation process of the painting, from start to finish. They will privilege the painters' individual accounts that are a human interpretation of the engagement and reflections of the occurring events. For the interviews I will make use of the book *Research: This Is It! Guidelines for Setting Up, Doing and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (2010) by Ben Baarda, and *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2018) by Denzin Norman and Yvonna Lincoln.

It is important that the interviews will be conducted in an open manner for new information to have a chance to surface. The questions should not be framed towards specific answers otherwise they will force the information into a predetermined subjectivity. The interviews will, therefore, be conducted in a natural flow and will, in a certain sense, guide themselves in the conversation that unfolds. This means there is a risk that the interviews will fall flat or become long-winded with non-specific information, but this is necessary to give room to an understanding of the painting-event. The open interviews will only introduce the topic of conversation to allow the unknown to emerge from the interview. For all intent and purpose, the interviews will ideally be conversations, or better yet monologues of the artist.

During the weekly interviewing process I will document the manifestation of the painting through photos and videos. The documentation will take into account not only the canvas on which the painting will be made but also any other shapes and forms it might take, like sketches, research, or other events

that affect the painting. Through this process of interviewing the painter and documenting the paintings I will embark on a research-journey to “explore the movements of specification and generalization, aggregation and disaggregation within the assemblages studied, and the consequent affect economies and micropolitics these movements reveal” (Fox and Alldred 169).

As an experienced painter myself, I have an inherent bias towards my perspective on painting. On the one hand, this could be perceived as a problem in interpreting the interviews or documentation of the painting. On the other, this allows me to see, interpret, and experience the painter and the painting uniquely. It will allow me to go into a conversation with the subjects and be part of the research-assemblage in manners that an objective viewer will have no access to. It will allow me “to think through observation rather than after it” (Ingold 12). My affinity with painting is likely the reason why I gravitated towards this subject in the first place. This affinity will allow me to ‘see’ things in a different manner. As Ingold argues, “only because we are already of the world, only because we are fellow travelers along with the beings and things that command our attention, can we observe them. There is no contradiction, then, between participation and observation; rather, the one depends on the other.” (Ingold 6)

The New Materialist approach in this study gives space for an experimental method to invite the unknown into the research. It blurs the boundaries of epistemological research to understand the human among its non-humans. The case study is an effort to mobilize the theory in “versatile research practices that can account for a human and more-than-human situation, a kind of perfect storm of intermingled human and non-human forces” (Åsberg 2).

3.2. *The Artist*

To select an artist for this research process I have created a preliminary list of painters that would be interesting to interview and document (Appendix 6). Because of the restrictions due to the COVID-19-pandemic, I focused on local artists in the city of Zwolle. I selected three professional artists that create abstract paintings and who have been active for at least 20 years as they have the experience and know-how to communicate the processes that occur in their work. The selection has not been done on the ‘successfulness’ of the artist in the art world per se but on the artist’s dedication and conviction to their work. The conviction and independence of the artist will ensure a more autonomous attitude towards painting outside of the convictions in the cultural field of production. The best candidate for this research project is a painter that just cannot help him/herself and has to paint, just for the act of painting itself. I have approached the selected painters to discuss if they were willing to join the research and had the time

to assist me in this research-journey and the artist Peter Geerts has graciously offered his time. Throughout the case study it will become apparent how well Geerts complements this study.

The interviews have been recorded and documented separately in weekly studio sessions that all embark on different topics in the painting process (Appendix 2). The photo-documentation has been documented in the different painting-events; the Red-Yellow-Black painting-event (Appendix 3), the Yellow painting-event (Appendix 4), and the Green painting-event (Appendix 5). Lastly, the photo-documentation of the studio has been added to give insight in the surrounding space and events of the research (Appendix 2). In the next chapter the results of the research-journey will be discussed in detail.



Figure 3: The unfolding of the research-assemblage during an interview in the studio - 360 degree photo. Left: the researcher, right: the painter, middle: the painting.



Figure 4: Peter Geerts in front of his paintings. (Geerts Website)

4. Case Study: Peter Geerts

4.1. *Peer*

Peter Geerts, better known among his friends as Peer, was born in 1957 in Engelen, the Netherlands. He lives and works in the city of Zwolle and has been painting for the better part of his life. Peer started drawing, during church mass and in the field, at a very young age. His talent was always seen and encouraged by his milieu (Session 2 00:12:13, 00:49:44). He never actively searched for a career in the arts but through the guidance and motivation from teachers, family and friends he feels that the arts in some way found him (Session 2 00:14:06). When he was seventeen (1975) he attended the Möller Instituut in Tilburg, until 1978, and from 1979 until 1982 he attended the Royal Academy of Arts in 's Hertogenbosch. Since then, he has been working on his art, his painting. Throughout the years he has had numerous exhibitions, and his works can be found in collections around the world. He is well-respected by his peers in the art community and is an active member of the Dutch art world.

Despite his years of work, just as many other artists, his paintings struggle to provide for a steady living (BKNL 47). For extra stability and to supplement his income Peer teaches weekly painting classes. This stability gives him space and freedom to work on his paintings in peace. It allows him to be self-sufficient and he does not have to reduce his work to commerce. He feels that his time to create new work is very contested, stuck between the efforts of making a living and making his art. On numerous occasions during the interviews he said that he cannot wait to get his pension, so he could finally get to work without distractions (Session 1 01:22:14, Session 2 02:06:55). This attitude illustrates the drive Peer has for his work. It underpins that he does not think of his artistry as an occupation but rather as a calling, or better yet an ever-growing obsession (Session 2 01:18:02). It is an intense internal desire for Peer to create his worlds (Session 2 00:56:36). It is a drive he cannot evade or ignore, something that speaks to the essence of his being.

Peer graduated in 1982 by making collages or assemblages, as he felt they were better suited to his abstract ideas. He states: “I graduated with a plot of which I did not know where the story went” (Session 2 01:32:17). His collage and patchwork style of painting is less static and more comfortable to bend and transform. It allows him to build a visual architecture that can embody the concept he is trying to make visible. The painting style is unhindered by story and narrative that bind its shape and is better suited to articulate the abstract expression and shapes underneath. By viewing the painting as a collage or assemblage, Peer is adept in breaking boundaries that occur during the painting process. He often subtracts canvasses or overpaints sections of his painting, just as quickly as he adds them. Peer approaches his work as analogues of his perceived reality. His website states the following;

Perception and painting are two major concepts in my work. The perception of reality is considered an everlasting variable interaction between subject and object. In the visualization of this interaction, I strive to an image of this perception. Key-motive is to find a constant in the relation between the different aspects of perception. The abstract tradition provides me with the best ability to visualize my concept of a pure painting. (Geerts *Website*)

Painting, for Peer, is not about the translation of reality, but rather its analogue emulation (Session 2 01:53:01). Through his work, he searches for the physicality of the painting that reflects his perception. He considers his works an analogue of reality.

The first ten years of work after his education have served as a background to his later ‘real’ work. In those years, Peer states, he was actually painting himself. This exploration Peer sees as a prerequisite for his later work. Only after he explored the boundaries of painting, he could release the biases of his

work, trust his intuition, and let go of his preconceptions of what painting needs to be. This freedom Peer feels is necessary to get to real work (Session 2 01:38:22). A work, in Peer's views, needs to get released of the preconceptions of what it is and should be unbound in its conception. Otherwise, it would effectively be bound inside the idea, a signifier of the signifier, a copy, a cliché, and it would never become the material articulation of the substance of which the idea came. The painting would not have a chance to articulate as the idea would keep it silent. The painting would become an imitation of the idea, instead of emulation of reality.

Peer adapts a modernist style of painting (Figure 4). The modernist style is a result of his upbringing and education; it has become his way of articulating. He states that this has become part of him, and he feels this way of painting suits him best. The modern style that Peer uses is not an active choice and could be any form or style (Session 5 01:08:12). If he were educated differently or born in a different time, he would probably articulate in a different style, just like if he were born in a different country, he would have spoken a different language. However, this does not mean he could not say the same thing or give the same meaning to his paintings. His adopted style is a mere part of the 'Figure' Deleuze refers to and acts like the face to the painting and not the substance it embodies. However, Peer has also stated that an artist has to be careful not to fall into his own esthetic for economic or social purposes (Session 1 00:42:13). He despises the stylization and simplification of reality, not only in his work but in all produced things that distract from and relegate reality. He uses stylized Playmobil figurines as an example, which he signifies as humancentric relegation that fools our perception of reality (Session 2 00:58:14). For Peer, things need to be 'real' (Session 2 01:01:12).

In his works, Peer searches for the visualization of the perception of his interactions with reality. He tries to capture the indefinable complexities of the reality and movements of life out of the moments that he experiences. He does not have the audacity to state that he grasps what that is exactly, but he hopes to touch or at least graze it in every work (Session 3 00:39:10). Peer states on his website:

My work deals with my emotional bond with shapes, materials and colours in which I always strive for a certain contrast that expresses a sense of being affected that I recognize in myself and things around me. It is this synthetic concretism wherein I strive for a fusion, within concrete painting, between the monochrome and the painterly gesture and thus give new meaning to the concept of painting within the fundamental imagery. (Geerts *Website*)

Peer does not only give new meaning to the concepts of painting, but also through the painting-event he creates new meaning in itself. In his paintings, he applies a holistic approach and tries to evade

categorization in subjects or themes. He explains that making a painting about the colour red would make it very static and dull. It would not escape its concept and would never become a 'real' work (Session 2 01:02:12). He further states that he tries not to relegate his works to categorization or thematization by doing work about the colour red. Only painting about red would bias the painting towards an unfair depiction of reality. "One facet from reality gets blown up and shown, but this cannot be done, you cannot single anything out, everything falls together" (Session 2 01:29:00). If Peer painted about red in his painting, he would have to talk about all aspects of red; the different hue, paints, textures, contrasts, and skins (Session 2 01:29:00). Later he explains that things are always in the context of others; things cannot be isolated and captured out of context (Session 2 01:55:23). Red in that sense cannot be seen on its own. It is only seen and appreciated fully in the full-colour spectrum.

The reality for Peer is not an issue of perception, "it is the same for everyone; we as humans just cannot understand its complexities" (Session 2 01:59:01). In his works, he strives to capture the complexity of reality in an analogue. He does not align his work to the socially constructed epistemologies of what is or should be, and instead gets lost in the abstraction of the grammar of the visual language to give his work meaning (Session 2 02:05:03). To get lost in abstraction is why Peer started to drop figuration from his painting in art school, as he wanted to be fair and not misuse figuration and signs as an excuse to paint. He instead wanted to concentrate on the power of expression and articulation of paint itself (Session 2 01:23:21).

For Peer the painting has to become the analogue of his reality. Not a mere representation of it, instead the painting itself has to embody the experience felt by him. His ability to measure this experience is a mystery to even himself. He refers to intuition and balance as his guiding factors to guide him through the painting process. He starts with a concept as an exploratory catalyst that he uses to examine an idea. This exploration is a hit-and-miss. Sometimes nothing really comes from it, but other times he feels he might have found something. In these latter cases, he works through the idea until the painting takes over and starts dictating what needs to be done. At this point, the painting and the painter start to merge, and the painter/painting assemblage is formed towards the articulation of the painting-event. Peer does not orchestrate the painting-event; he has become a part of the articulation of it. Similarly, as thought needs a thinker (Taguchi 218), a painting needs a painter. Peer states that if he is lucky, he will disappear when he is painting (Session 1 00:29:01). He refers to the composer and painter John Cage, who stated; "When you start working, everybody is in your studio- the past, your friends, enemies, the art world, and above all, your own ideas- all are there. But as you continue painting, they start leaving, one by one, and you are left completely alone. Then, if you are lucky, even you leave" (NY Times). The creation of a painting for

Peer is no egocentric expression. He believes for a painting to become any good he has to lose himself in it. In this sense, the idea and concept that started it has to make place for the painting itself, the idea gets left behind, and the painter/painting assemblage starts to outgrow its individual parts. At this point, it is unclear who or what is in control of the articulation of the assemblage. It happens in between the painter and painting, making the assemblage itself the controller constituting the painter and painting on its boundaries.

The initial method of following a work from start to finish has proven to be an illusion. It soon became apparent that a painting does not start out of a void; a painting springs from the works that came before (Session 1 00:48:15). A new work edges out of the others and differs itself from them. The start of the work splits off from other works, like dividing cells working to sustain the same body. Following the path back to the start of the painting has continuously led me to other works. Instead, I decided to explore the paintings Peer was working on during the studio sessions. The painting-events were documented during the interviews, with additions of earlier documentation of the artist. This resulted in the documentation of three painting-events: Red-Yellow-Black (Appendix 3), Yellow (Appendix 4), and Green (Appendix 5). These names were assigned by Peer, as he refers to the paintings by their colour. The Green painting-event has had an interesting path and it has been moving through his studio since 2014. It has had a long path to its end state, which was documented on video in Studio-Session 6. It was also the painting that had more transitions in shape and form than the others during the research period. Because of the interest of Peer in the green painting and the many shapes it took, the green painting has been the main focus in this case study.

This case study will be addressed in five more sections. The next section will address the studio, where I will go into the contested space of this sanctuary. The second section will address the fight between Peer and the painting within the painting-event. The third section will discuss in what way the physicality of painting measures meaning. The fourth section will show the painting-events. Finally, in the fifth section, the flows of affect within the painting-event will be discussed.

4.2. The Studio



Figure 5: Peer his studio space. Left: the Red-Yellow-Black painting-event. Middle: Peer. Right: the Green painting-event.

The studio is often seen as the bounding space of artistic freedom, as a sanctuary that is the artist's own. In it, the artist can work freely on his works, and its walls protect the artist and his work from outside influence and intervention. It acts as a protective shell to encapsulate the artist and his works, a little bubble in time for artistic freedom. This romantic notion of what we would like the studio to be is a perception of the studio from the outside. The studio appears as a sanctuary on the outside because the artist is continuously struggling through the contested space the studio inhabits on the inside. The artist frees the space by the creation of his art.

The studio is the space that gives a place to the painting-event. This event in turn makes the place the studio, they are co-constituents of each other. They bring each other forth. The studio is the container for the painting-event; without this content, it would just be an empty shell. The studio is the site for the infrathin to let itself be intuited and seen. It gives rise to “the differential that marks the rhythm that is the oscillation between what is perceptible and what is imperceptible yet felt, in the event” (Manning *Pragmatics* 101). The studio is where the pendulum swings between the painter and the painting in full affect. It acts as a housing to the clockwork of the painting-event. Swinging from the quality to the intensity affect, from cliché to freedom, from invisible to visible, from known to the unknown, and back again.

The painting-event separates and differs with each swing the known from the unknown. They keep transforming, perpetually progressing from state to state. “This means that it does not arrive at any final answers. It does not even seek solutions. It seeks to re-pose the problems life poses itself, always under transformation.” (Massumi *Politics* xi) These “transformations that blow apart semiotics systems or regimes of signs on the plane of consistency of a positive absolute deterritorialization” Deleuze and Guattari refer to as diagrammatic (Deleuze and Guattari 138). The painting-event is always in movement and on each swing evades its signifier further in an aimless flight to uncover the unknown. This mode of exploration is not without its resistance. The act of dissolving signifiers towards a mattering signified in

the painting-event encounters the already present agency, historicity, and meaning Barad refers to in her word-thing pairs (Barad 150). It is the social flows that are already present that hook onto the painting-event and try to define its meaning. Bennett states that “this impulse toward cultural, linguistic, or historical constructivism, which interprets any expression of thing-power as an effect of culture and the play of human powers, politicizes moralistic and oppressive appeals to “nature” (Bennett 17). It “tends to obscure from view whatever thing-power there may be” (Bennett 17).

Peer has a similar attitude to revealing the analogue reality in his paintings. He has to free the painting from its dominant signifying markers. However, Peer makes an interesting distinction. He approaches his painting style, the history of painting, his education and other cultural heritage as tools for the articulation in the painting-event. These tools exactly give him the means to pursue the analogue reality, the thing-power, of the painting-event. When I asked him in what way his paintings were being informed and bound by his cultural heritage and education, he argued that the art of painting had freed itself completely. He nuanced this by stating there is always a composition; it is never completely free (Session 4 00:49:56). Peer went on to say that everyone always already has preconceptions in their heads, but he always tries to break through these preconceptions and not exclude anything. He said that this is why he graduated with collages and assemblages, they can be anything, leather against metal, material and colour sensitivity, next to expression (Session 4 00:51:54). Form-language, Peer states, is a solitary world in which you can state everything, “maybe not in a concrete manner but in a painterly manner” (Session 4 00:55:32). Peer explains that by making a painting, he gives expression to the relational existence of his surroundings (Session 4 00:58:11). That is to say that he is a result of his historicity, education, and time. The act of painting itself is free by breaking down those boundaries and explores what is underneath. In Session 5, he aptly states: “I cannot put myself outside of my time and my painterly education. It is a limitation of time; I am the child of my upbringing. I do not consider this an obstruction, but a given fact. It is the entrance.” (Session 5 01:13:12)

That is to say that Peer uses the obscuring social flows that constitute his cultural heritage, historicity and meaning as a departure of his existence, and by association, the painting-event. Peer states that in a sense, the painting is a registration of his being (Session 4 01:48:20). It is an entrance for exploration and measurements of his reality, which in turn result in a signified of the unknown. His personal existence and reality are then a measurement of the affects of thing-power with symbolic signifiers co-constituted in between. The obscured view to thing-power that Bennett refers to, is not obscuring per se but a relational expression of intra-action that co-constitutes reality and meaning between the two. It is not so much obscuring as it is a revelation of its measured existence that invites

further exploration. It becomes a motive of inquiry for understanding the more-than. Peer illustrates his experience of painting by comparing it to walking through the forest. “When I walk through the forest, I can experience light, sound, colour, and space. For example, the ground, I can walk easily on it, or it can be hard; it can rain to hinder my stroll. That is not me, that is me and reality. I do not determine, when I walk through a forest, the kind of weather, or how easily I can walk through it, or overgrowth or the landscape at all. That is not my creation, but how this affects me and what I see is a consultation of me and the forest. You are never a dead, motionless thing, life consists of experience, doing things.” (Session 3 00:59:22 - 01:00:42).

The studio, therefore, is the arena for the fight between the congestion of the situational context of social flows that predetermine already constituted outdated meaning. The painting-event takes these social flows as motives of input to explore and deterritorialize their meaning to a new output. From the outside, the studio looks like a sanctuary for artistic freedom and expression, but this is constituted by the painter who fights through the contested flows of domination that try to take hold and frees the studio from them. Peer uses the social flows for input to gain entry to the exploration of thing-power and mattering-meaning of the unknown. The social flows are the runway for the path of flight to take off to its unknown destination. The turbulence caused by the social flows that try to keep meaning grounded and static give rise to a fight for progress and vitality. It calls into action ‘negative prehension’, “that which is not actualized but nonetheless affects experience” (Manning *Pragmatics* 99). For the unknown to make itself visible “negative prehension is what must be actively excluded in order for the event to have consistency” (Manning *Pragmatics* 100). To make the unknown visible, the painting-event needs to differ the contested flows from each other. In its struggle, it has to measure “what cannot conform to the colour of this singular experience” and “must be backgrounded in order that this experience be fully what it is” (Manning *Pragmatics* 100).



Figure 6: Red-Yellow-Black painting-event in its final state.

4.3. *The Fight*

Bourdieu states that the “artistic field is a field of forces, but it is also a field of struggles tending to transform or conserve this field of forces (Bourdieu 30). For Bourdieu, this refers to the struggle between the dominating agents in the field of cultural production that de/territorialize the social flows of affect. For Peer the struggle is already ongoing long before the painting is assimilated into any field outside the studio. This fight is part of the creation of the painting in the painting-event from the very start. It is apparent in its material and semiotic flows. The fight for acknowledgement, the will to be seen of thing-power, presents itself against apprehension. The negative prehension acts up to reveal itself, and for that to happen it has to be “excluded by necessity from what is foregrounded, negative prehension nonetheless lurks on the edge of appearance in the way all backgrounds do” (Manning *Pragmatics* 100). Through the active exclusion from the known “the infrathin directly prehends the potential of the more-than” (Manning *Pragmatics* 100). It is a fight for meaningless meaning.

Peer is well aware of this state of affairs in his work. In his work, he often struggles for meaning. He states that “everything in his work needs to become apparent, but the components should also do something. Peer explains that “there is a boundary and a non-boundary, that is what the fight is about. Often, even though you only use a small number of means in the fight, it is still too much. All the stages that the painting has had along the way has a story. That is where the fight happens. The story is already too much of a construction and misses its target. I did not have any feeling for it. I want to grasp that constant movement; it was not alive anymore; it has to stay alive.” (Session 5 00:26:02) This reaction of Peer clearly illustrates his struggle between the narrative discourse of the quality affect and the abstract intuition of the intensity affect that he is searching for. Once the narrative takes over in the painting-event, he pronounces the painting dead, as “it has to stay alive”. The painting has to act, “the components should also do something”. It is this movement of interfering when the negative prehension lurks up to offer the infrathin that seems to drive Peer to react. It gives him the bearings to wander into the unknown. The unknown, in this way, is not a sight of indifference but one of consistency, “without this absoluteness, there would be no difference between this and that—no “elbow room in the universe” (Manning *Pragmatics* 100). It is this contested movement of the pendulum that starts differing the painting-event from the known.

Peer tries to go into the painting arena without preconceptions. He wants to surprise himself. “If you already know in advance, why would you bother to make it?” (Session 5 01:05:43). Often Peer has a feeling, concept, idea or vague image, but he wants to extract something from that, and the extraction is the fight. To Peer it is all about visual acuity. Making visible, and while making it visible, making it free.

“You often have preconceptions of concepts, and it is all about liberating them. That is very important to me” (Session 5 01:04:38 - 01:06:23). “For example, I try to liberate that green from its precomposed meaning. It has to do with ending up in that empty space. Some sort of original state.” (Session 5 01:37:01) Deprived of signifiers and other anthropocentric appropriation this empty state is where thing-power can articulate; it gives the painting the chance to speak, and the painter a chance to hear. It is in this intra-action where the painting gets connected to its body. It is an unknown body that is edging into the known to new territorializations of vitality.

The painting-event is “what has now emerged as the subject of the occasion, a subject born of the process” (Manning *Pragmatics* 100). Peer states that once you arrive at a state, that this becomes a new site of departure. Every time he arrives at a new chapter and new things start presenting themselves there has to be a reevaluation of what comes next; the size, the planes, the colour, or the lines. Things become redundant or too much and have to be removed, and other things added (Session 5 00:30:12). On every chapter “this actuation of the *it is* is brief, always on the edge of perishing, where the force and not the form-taking as such will be what contributes to future parsings” (Manning *Pragmatics* 100). This iterating movement slowly deprives the painting-event of its story and signifiers and frees it to a material articulation of meaning. In every chapter, the encounter between the known and unknown collide and position the painting-event in one or the other. The painting-event intra-acts, and through the process of experimentation and elimination, tries to articulate itself. Through this fight, the painting-event reveals itself, as “to experiment is to create, produce, refine and stabilize phenomena”(Barad 144).

This process, according to Peer, happens intuitively. “You cannot explain an artwork; you act on intuition, that is where the fight happens!” (Session 5 01:39:55). The fight in the painting-event revolves around the de/territorialization of boundaries on which social, semiotic and material flows of affect fight for acknowledgement. The painting-event is a contested spacetime that catalyzes the arena of exploration—a means to get lost into the unknown. It is this fight of flows that actualize the painting and, although a still image, keeps it in movement pushing boundaries, it acts like “a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle” (Deleuze and Guattari 25). By marking its boundaries, the painting-event reveals the more-than, it measures that which cannot be said. The painting-event, in its fight from its bounds, measures reality by breaking boundaries and explores the unknown. Peer feels that if art has a function at all, it is “asking the questions you cannot reach. I cannot get closer to reality” (Session 5 01:48:12).

“Maybe if you peel everything away, it is the essence that remains, a sort of incantation of the imprisonment of one's being” (Session 5 01:42:01). This statement echoes Barad's when she states that

“discursive practices ... allows for the possibility of a genealogical analysis of the material-discursive emergence of the human” (Barad 150). That is to say, the painting-event fights to explore the scope of reality. It co-constitutes the binding boundaries in which the human can become. It breaks new grounds in an exploration of new signifiers to unknown signified. By fighting to overcome the event-horizon of the known, the painting-event offers up new possibilities that are evidently there. This offer of possibilities, in turn, sparks the discursive practices of the social flows to try to signify its place in the semiotic order. This process assimilates it as a co-constituent of the material-discursive emergence of the human- the bounding markers that dictate our existence. “Knowing”, as Barad continually argues, “is not a bounded or closed practice but an ongoing performance of the world” (Barad 150).



Figure 7: Yellow painting-event in its final state.

4.4. Measured Meaning

In this section I will explore how the painting-event measures meaning, to show how the painter and the painting articulate in physicality of movement. In the intra-action of the painting-event, the painter and painting bounce off of each other towards new meaning. They collide, and in that tension, something new comes forth. “The tension between things is the $n+1^1$ of the infrathin: the unquantifiable force of difference that creates an interlude in the time of the event.” (Manning *Pragmatics* 109) The painting-event moves through the world, trying to make sense of what-is and explores the more-than. It takes the social, material, semiotic flows as input and intra-acts with them to discover new meaning through them. Something Donna Haraway refers to as Sympoiesis. “Sympoiesis is a simple word; it means “making-with. ... It is a word for worlding-with, in company.” (Haraway 58) The painting-event is not a phenomenon by itself; it is an event constituted of the painter and painting who themselves are products of worldliness. The painting-even moves through the rhizomatic webs of the known, searching for that inkling of intuiting of the negative prehension that gives rise to the unknown. It measures meaning for the meaningless.



Figure 8: Peer measuring the Yellow Painting-event.

It is this movement through the world that brings the intra-actions needed to find that entry to the infrathin. Peer has a similar experience as he states: “Painting moves me, it is an analogy, it arises naturally. Sometimes it touches me in my expression, sometimes more concrete. It is a harmony, it is thinking with my painting-feeling. I cannot consciously apprehend what needs to change. If something is there, then I react, and interaction grows.” (Session 3 01:02:23) The measurements between Peer and the painting escalate, and they affect each other on what they should do. Peer mixes and applies the paint, and the painting informs him what to do with it. It is the affect communicating in between that dictates their movement. This communication for Peer is not linguistic, an idea, or in concept, it is more physically, a dance of matter.

Peer often jumps up during the sessions and walks to the painting to portray his actions with the painting. He moves his arm in broad strokes through the air to enact the experience of painting while telling what colours he used. This movement is indicative of Peer's physicality towards painting. “I am a physical painter. I experience something that

¹ (*number+1*, it is an abbreviation often used in Posthuman discourse to signify the more-than)

arises, I experience that in my body” (Session 3 00:58:20). It is like Peer is stepping in his painting intra-acting with its incorporeal body to show its dimensions. Painting itself is an act; it is a doing of matter. “It arises by doing it. Through the action some sort of saying power arises. In a sense it is determined by the act of painting itself.” (Session 3 00:59:11) The painting-event through acting gives body to the meaningless meaning. “Because you are doing it, a work gets meaning because they are made visible. Meaning flows out of a work” (Session 5 01:28:23). It is a great example of how, like Wetherell puts it, “an interest in the capacities of bodies to affect and be affected opens up a whole new canvas” (Wetherell 75).

The painting, in some way, communicates to the painter. It is materially articulated by the patches of paint that are placed next, over, and under each other. An architecture of paint that invokes a visual meaning in the painting that relays back to the painter. Peer paints paint, not the depiction of a scene, landscape, or other figurative representations, just bare paint. He uses paint not to resemble something but lets the paint speak for itself. He finds it unfair to impose upon the materiality of the paint a figurative image that only distracts from its essence. Essentially, this keeps the painting pure and the path for the paint to speak openly. Painting is an articulation of forces. Deleuze explains that these forces establish the relationship to the visible in the expression of them. He takes the example of the scream that in itself has no meaning until it connects to the forces that inflict the horror that has given rise to the scream. He states that Bacon was not painting the scream, but the horror behind it (Deleuze 60). That is to say, that what is visible is not what gives meaning to what is seen. It is the forces that give action to the visible, the affect that has an effect, that fills the experience and moves the body to be touched, concurrently registering the experience to meaning. It is not so much the depiction of the painting that is the focus of meaning, the scream, but the influence of affect that made it articulate, the horrors that caused it. For Peer, this influence of forces needs to be articulated in the materiality of paint, not a representation. “An image needs to be pure. I search for some kind of pureness, some kind of truth. Anything outside of that I feel is only cloudiness or an escape.” (Session 3 00:48:08) What eventually is articulated in this materiality is of no concern to Peer, it is what it is (Session 3 00:59:12).

The articulation of the forces in the painting-event happens intuitively. The painter is honing in on the negative prehension that needs foregrounding from the background. The intuition of the infrathin leads him through the known to the edges of prehension. What is made concrete in the painting-event is a material signified that lacks a signifier. This unknown embodied materiality that has become through the painting-event is made by the movement and application of paint. The paint itself is a medium for the unknown to latch onto once it is devoid of prehension. The manipulation of paint

acts like a vacuum that pulls in something concrete. This vacuum already becomes apparent in the flows of events during the painting-event and dictates what paint goes where. It is not a matter of voiding so that anything can be put in its place. It is not an event of hollowing out; it is an event leading to something consistent. Peer tries to get to a particular essence of contrasts in his work. He explains it is a result of the collision of him and the world (Session 4 01:55:01).



Figure 9: The mixing table in Peer his studio.

Already at the mixing of paint, the exploration and discovery start. Peer still discovers new colours when he is mixing paint. He states that “it is an amazing childlike exploration that gets me going every time” (Session 2 01:16:01). The mixing of the paint is the inception of exploration to the meaning of the painting. The mixing informs the path in the future where the painting-event is going. It is filled with possibilities and envisionment; it sparks the intuition to become consistent. The colour mixed will eventually become the painting. In a way, the pallet, or in this case table (Figure 9), is the forefather of the painting. It is the territory where the materiality of painting already exists in a deconstructed fashion. The piles of mattering paint are already signaling the exploration of the unknown. It is just a matter of time. Once the paint hits the canvas, the articulation takes a form. Peer explains: “Magical! It’s only paint but once you apply it next to each other it starts saying something!” (Session 3 00:54:11). He explains further that this gives rise to possibilities that were not there before. “That is what painting is about, about the possibilities of designing the painterly imagery. Sometimes when I am open to it, I do things of which I did not know I would do beforehand” (Session 4 01:58:08). The paint itself provides openings to continue. To Peer, this is a great example of how the painting does not come from an idea, but it becomes through doing it. (Session 4 00:28:30). In session five, he elaborated how the paint on the canvas moves through

each other and how the different paint creates contrasts that differ one from the other. It is in the collision of contrast, tone, shape, accents, space, colour, et cetera, that the paint differs. These differing boundaries create the tension in the paint that starts articulating (Figure 10). Peer states that if there was no tension and harmony in the painting, it would just become one blot and would be meaningless. It is in the collisions of paints that makes one and the other seen. It is the tension in between Peer assigns as the articulation of the paint, the difference between the two that articulates (Session 5 00:35:00). The paint opens up different lines of possibilities, “these differing lines of thought can productively be read through one another for the patterns of resonance and dissonance that illuminate new possibilities for understanding and for being” (Barad 142). To Peer, it is a matter of seeking balance for the articulation to become concrete (Session 5 00:37:00). “It is a visual language, you can make a composition that tries to say something, but different, a blotch of paint is simply not a word.” (Session 3 00:52:33) Although painting can be assigned a visual language, in light of New Materialist theory it becomes a mattering meaning as well.



Figure 10: Close-up of the articulating Green Painting-event.

The movements of the painting-event become “the material conditions of possibility and impossibility of mattering; they enact what matters and what is excluded from mattering” (Barad 148). Peer explains that at a particular moment, tension starts to build in the painting, and he tries to make that as concrete as possible (Session 4 00:43:22). This tension signals that the painting-event in its physical materiality does not pursue the painting as a commodity, product, or thing, but it pursues the mattering meaning it is trying to articulate. By the intra-action of Peer with his painting they agentially cut mattering meaning into reality. They use paint to build an image, and the intuition is being driven by

the movement and experience from the contrast and contradictions; open or closed, complex or simple, white or grey, thick or thin, up or down, that articulate the painting in the event (Session 4 00:40:00). "It is only through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of "components" of phenomena become determinate and that particular articulations become meaningful" (Barad 148). Through the iteration of intra-action the painting-event takes form, in every moment of movement, the paint measures the body of the event, thereby stating its figure.

Through the mattering of paint, the painting-event "specifies an agential cut that enacts a resolution (within the phenomenon) of the semantic, as well as antic, indeterminacy" (Barad 148). In his work, Peer tries to grasp reality in the contrast of his paint. This grasping is not a literal translation where a blotch of paint becomes a sign (Session 3 00:50:12). Instead, "it is more an intensification in paint of experience that tries to grasp the abstraction that lives underneath" (Session 3 00:53:00). It is in this sense that the painting-event is abstract. "But in itself, it marks not simply an abstract possibility of reversibility but the real existence of a point of inversion as an autonomous, irreducible phenomenon" (Deleuze and Guattari 447). This mark of measuring the abstract is what invokes the signified lacking its signifier, the measurement of meaningless meaning. Peer asks himself if the act of painting is some kind of human ritual to get a grip on something you cannot assign any meaning, but nonetheless, is still there (Session 5 01:31:02). It is the indeterminacy of which you cannot talk, but everybody still feels like it is the truth (Session 3 00:35:12). "Because it seeks a narrative by itself, and is very open, it can show something that cannot be said. That is it really..." (Session 6 00:07:20).



Figure 11: Green painting-event in its final state.

4.5. *The Painting-Events*

During the Studio Sessions, three painting-events were documented and discussed during the interviews. The Red-Yellow-Black (Appendix 3), the Yellow (Appendix 4), and the Green painting-event (Appendix 5). A lot has already been stated about the findings from these encounters. The focus in this thesis is how the painting-event articulates rather than what they are articulating. Through this exploration, it became apparent that the mattering materiality of the painting-events should speak for themselves. As they embody a signified lacking a signifier anything that is said about them would unfairly subject them into an anthropocentric instrumentalization of pragmatic value. It is exactly the state of uncertainty that lets the painting-event speak and differ. It is “speculative in the sense that it is open to transformation by the potentializing force of what courses through the event, even when it cannot be fully actualized” (Manning *Pragmatics* 103). This is where the painting-event expresses its thing-power. It is more of a doing than a thing. “What art can do is activate the infrathin of a potentializing force ... in its making felt how else experience can be ascertained, beyond definition” (Manning *Pragmatics* 103). This is why I will let the photo documentation speak for itself, as the material expression of the intra-action in the painting-event. Beneath are the overviews of the photo-documentation of the three painting-events. The overviews show the differing stages the painting-event moved through until it reaches consistency in its final state.

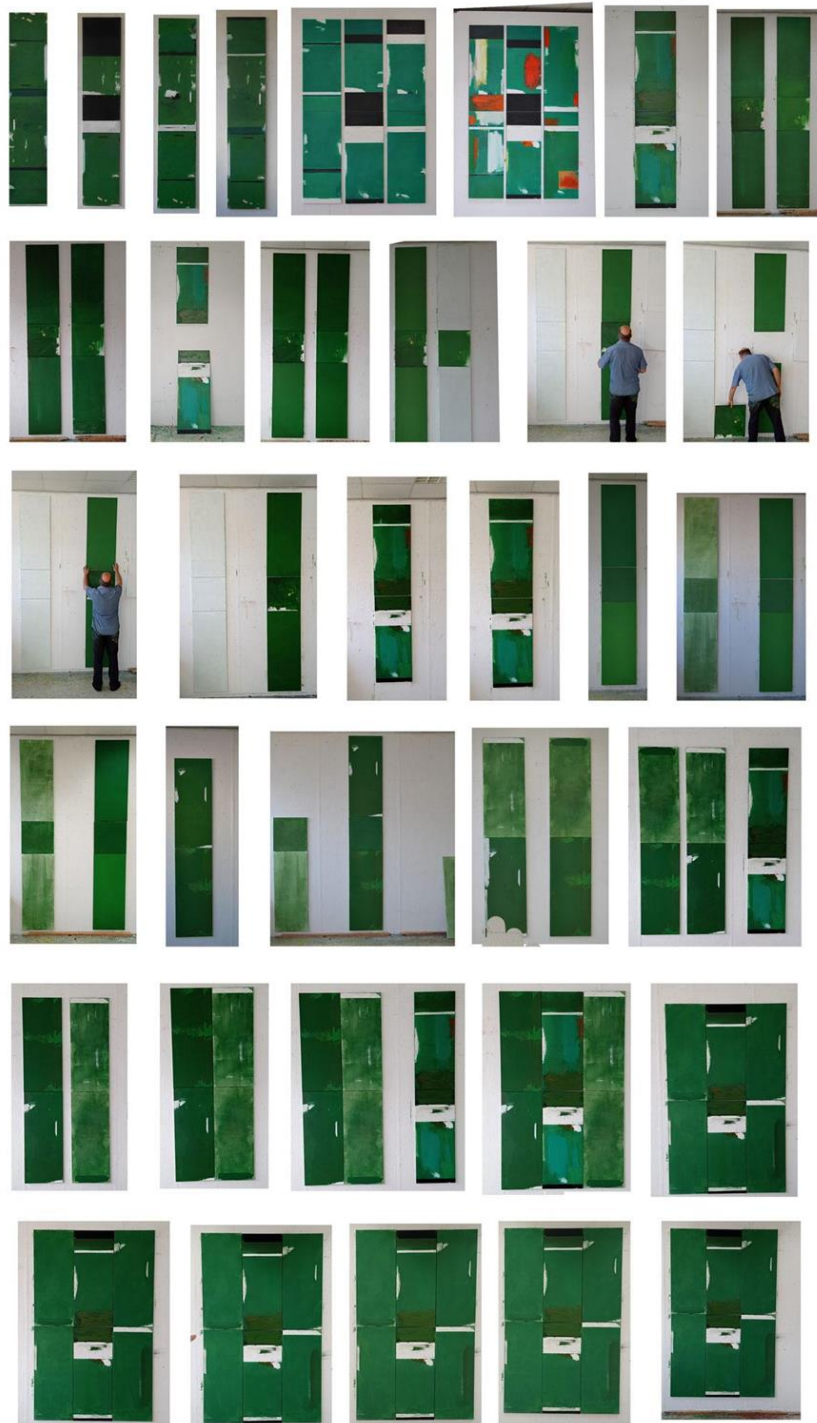


Figure 12: Chronological overview of the Green painting-event, 2020. Ordered left-right (Appendix 5)

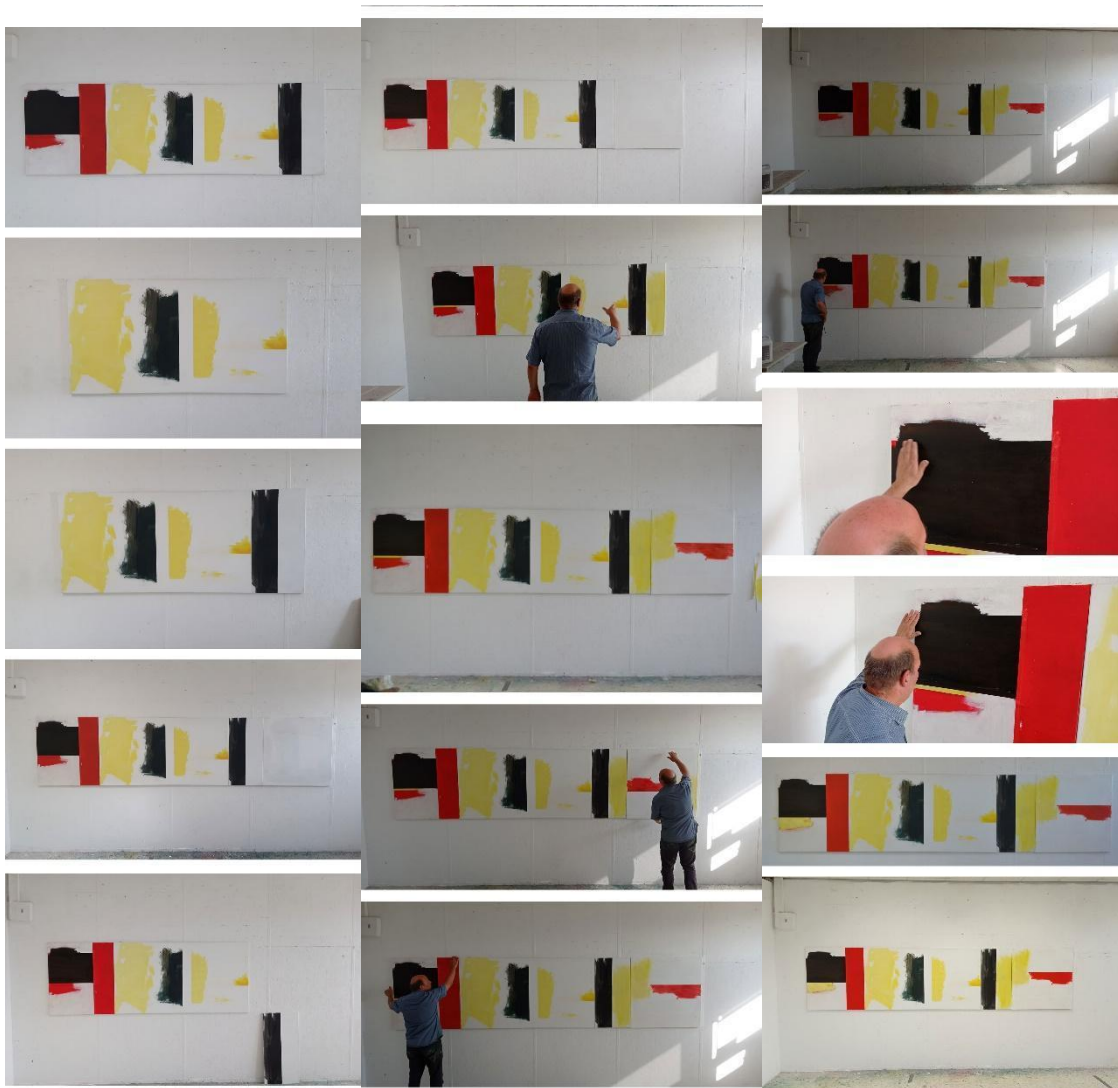


Figure 13: Chronological overview of the Red-Yellow-Black painting-event, 2020. *Ordered top-down* (Appendix 3)



Figure 14: Chronological overview of the Yellow painting-event, 2020. *Ordered top-down* (Appendix 4)

The painting-events are all lacking a clear start. This is because Peer works through the painting-events, rather than working at it. While being in one painting-event, motive for new ones arise. He explains that he has enough entries for paintings he has not made along the way to last him a lifetime. That is why he cannot wait for his pension and start pursuing them. During the Green painting-event, it became apparent how new painting-event arise when another painting popped-up that seemed to be its offspring (Figure 15). Upon asking Peer where it came from, and if it was a study of the Green painting-event, he responded: “No, it is a work that I have made. It is a thing in itself. I liked the nuances of the colour, thought from the monochrome. I liked the openness and softness. Maybe it originated from the Green painting-event, at least from its circumstance, from the same time. However, it is a thing in itself.” (Session 5 00:34:02) This statement again shows that the painting-event comes forth from the intra-action with other events. They offer themselves through the act of painting. They are born out of an intra-active doing between the painter and the painting. The paintings do not start at a beginning, but rather emerge from “densifications, intensifications, reinforcements, injections, showerings, like so many intercalary events” (Deleuze and Guattari 328). “The fact is that the beginning always begins in-between, intermezzo.” (Deleuze and Guattari 329)



Figure 15: The Studio, Right: The Green painting-event, Left: the offspring of the Green Painting-Event, Far Left: Peer, 2020.

The end of the painting-event is a lot clearer to Peer. Peer explains that at a certain point there grows imagery that is not his anymore. There is a point in the process where the imagery takes over, and the event takes place outside of him, then the painting is not about him, or his entry to it, anymore. The painting-event then starts to articulate how it needs to be finished (Session 3 01:08:22). “At a certain point the thing becomes itself. Something arises that is a solution to the image, and then it gets a face.” (Session

6 00:29:29) The face as Deleuze and Guattari argue “digs the hole that subjectification needs in order to break through; it constitutes the black hole of subjectivity as consciousness or passion, the camera, the third eye” (Deleuze and Guattari 168). This emerging face is no signifier, “it is itself in redundancy with the redundancies of signifi²ance or frequency, and those of resonance or subjectivity. The face constructs the wall that the signifier needs in order to bounce off of; it constitutes the wall of the signifier, the frame or screen” (Deleuze and Guattari 168).

To finish this section, I will end with a summary from Peer of the painting-event;

When I get the feeling that it becomes a whole, a whole where I can no longer add or remove anything, but where it does become a beautiful whole. You cannot think in advance how it will work out, that has to be materialized through doing, that is where communication arises, and at some point, it becomes a concrete form. It is a kind of fog that clears. A kind of seed that you produce. The outcome is open, but in that process of touching, a surface is created in which there is a space in which things take place, there is something free, there is movement in it, but also peace. The whole process of creation is somewhat analogous to how things go in life, which also arises from doing. At a certain moment, something arises that you can no longer get around, which is so decisive that if you now do something, then it is no longer the thing. (Session 6 00:27:12)

The painting-event “is now a problem of consistency or consolidation: how to consolidate the material, make it consistent, so that it can harness unthinkable, invisible, nonsonorous forces” (Deleuze and Guattari 343). “The invocation to the Cosmos does not at all operate as a metaphor; on the contrary, the operation is an effective one, from the moment the artist connects a material with forces of consistency or consolidation” (Deleuze and Guattari 345). The painting-event exhibits a mode of operation in which “one could only “circle” around a concept, perhaps until one gets dizzy or arrives at the point at which nonidentity with the real can no longer be ignored” (Bennett 31).

4.6. *Concluding*

After all the exploration in Peer’s studio I will venture to arrive at a conclusion which explains what forces of events occur in the painting-event. From the encounters in the interviews and photo-documentation,

² From French, translates to signification.

it is clear that Peer is intra-acting with the painting. The intra-actions between Peer and the paintings float on the material, semiotic, and social flows of affect. The flows intra-act in unison with time to produce the painting-event. It is these flows that co-constitute the painter and the painting at its banks. The painter and painting emerge from the articulation of the flows of affect, not the other way around. The painting-event acts as a vehicle to get lost towards the unknown. It creates a bridge for the unknown to be able to seep in and sediment in the strata of the known. The flows of affect measure the painter and the painting in the event; as well as the painter and painting measure the flows of affect. The flows of events in/form each other in their doing. While doing, their boundaries collide, differing one from the other in their ongoing articulation. It is not the painter who knows the painting; “knowing does not require intellection in the humanist sense, either; knowing is a matter of differential responsiveness (as performatively articulated and accountable) to what matters” (Barad 380). Nor is it the painting who knows the painter. The painter and painting are both articulated in the flows of events, “they do so as part of the larger material configuration of the world and its ongoing, open-ended articulation” (Barad 380).

The painting-event articulates meaningless materiality. It expresses a signified matter lacking a signifier, and it is unknown. The mattering materiality is expressed in the physicality of doing. The signified matter is not ambiguous. It is a polyvocal consistent body that expresses itself through time in the painting-event. “A single substance of expression is produced. ... The abstract machine is triggered that must allow and ensure the almightiness of the signifier as well as the autonomy of the subject.” (Deleuze and Guattari 187) The physical materiality of the painting is a mere face produced to this mattering body of substance. Through the painting-event, the body is measured by the flows of affect until the face to the body is found. The face of the painting-event, the physical painting itself, is the socializing interface to the mattering of its body. “The semiotic of the signifier and the subjective never operates through bodies. It is absurd to claim to relate the signifier to the body.” (Deleuze and Guattari 187) It is the face that is the screen on which the socializing flows of affect can then project its signifiers. It offers an interface to the binding matter that constitutes our world, “it performs the facialization of the entire body and all its surroundings and objects, and the landscapification of all worlds and milieus” (Deleuze and Guattari 187).

From the encounters with Peer, there seem to be three clear flows of affect that coarse through the painting-event. I have put the material, social, and semiotic flows of affect that are de/re/territorializing in the painting-event in a diagram to visualize their movement and intra-action (Figure 16). The material flows of affect (M.f) constitute the painting-event by the territorialization of the paint. The paint starts as an amorphous goo on the table, and through intra-action with the painter and painting it finds consistency on the canvas. The social flows of affect (So.f) in turn are deterritorialized by

the painter in his fight to free the painting-event from the dominant axioms that dictate the known. The deterritorializing social flows remove the signifiers from the territorializing material flows. The material and social flows of affect work in unison to pierce the value of the known by intuiting the infrathin towards the negative prehension in the mattering semiotic flows of affect (Se.f). It is the negative prehension that dictates the unknown body that gives a face to the material flows in the painting. The territorialization of the material flows towards the semiotic flows of affect is where the mattering starts to matter. The deterritorializing of the social flows of affect, in turn, ensures the freedom for the material flow to be open, unbound, and meaningless. In this way, the pendulum swings through the painting-event, trying to find consistency in the unknown.

The Flows of Affect in the Painting-Event

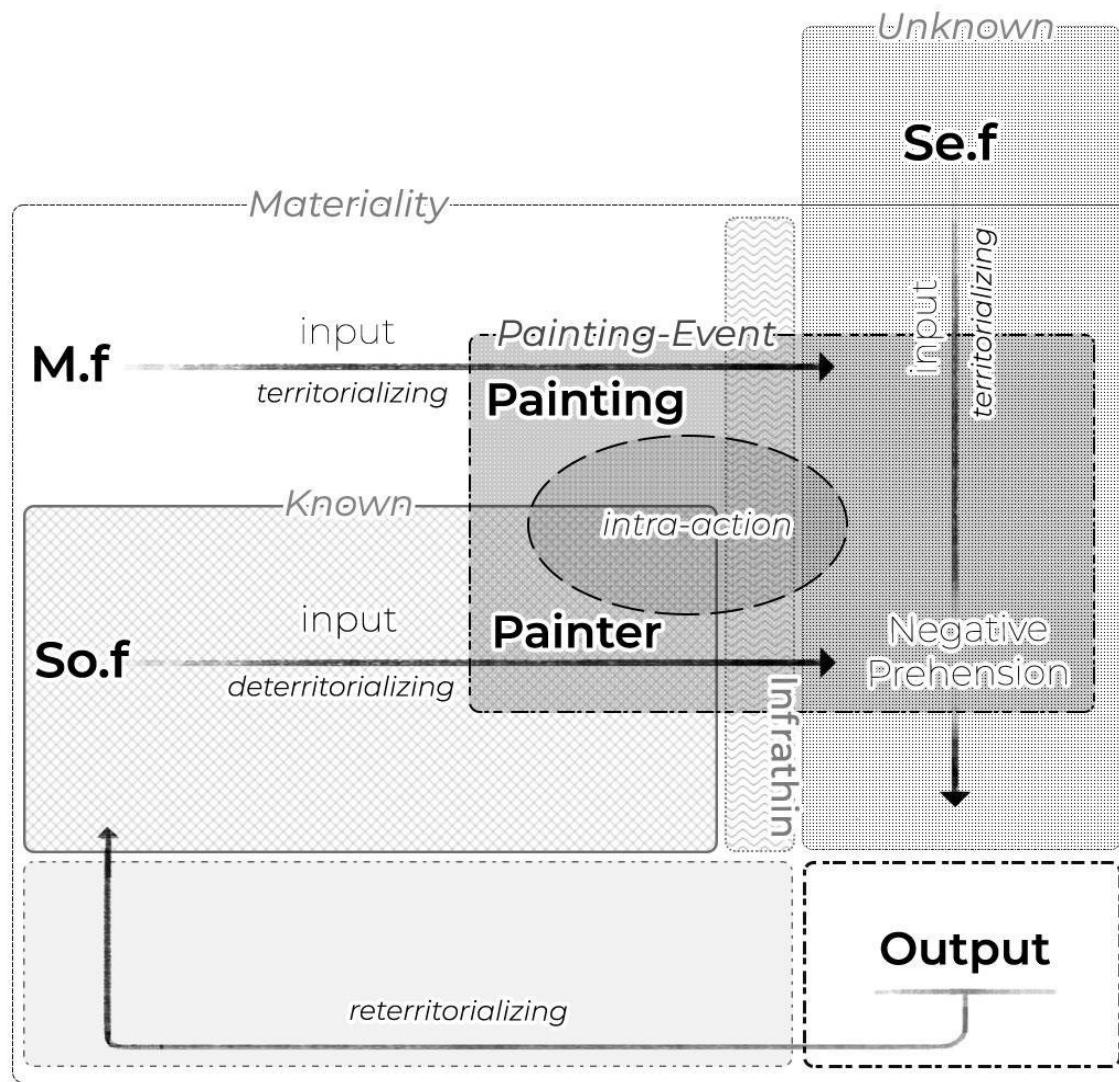


Figure 16. Diagram of the flows of affects in the painting-event.

The territorialized social flows of affect offer a connection to the reality of the world. It supplies entries for Peer to embark on the journey through the painting-event. Through the intra-action with the material flows of his paint, he starts to deterritorialize the social flows in an open-ended practice that dissolves the boundaries of signification. The painting-event becomes a material mattering that is relieved of its signifiers. It articulates mattering materiality that cannot be pronounced; it speaks for itself through the boundaries of its mattering paints. Through the intra-action the painting-event measures a meaningless embodiment of the unknown. The embodiment of the unknown constitutes the painting as its face, and the painter as the expression on that face. In the painting-event, the artist has to find a mode of intra-acting that allows him to get lost to overcome the event-horizon of the social flows of affect and pierce the boundaries of the known into the unknown. It is where the difference between creation and recreation, dynamic and lethargic, vitality and death, is articulated.

What is produced in the painting-event is not a product, nor a commodity, what is produced is a doing. It is a moving of flows of affect that articulate an expression of the measurements of our human intra-action with existence. It articulates the extent of the boundaries of our human bonds by getting lost towards the exceeding boundaries of reality. It is only when the painting-event gets back in touch with the pragmatic social flows of the dominating axioms that it is met with the anthropocentric appropriation of subjectification and signification to get reterritorialized into the known. It might, therefore, not be the signature, as Bourdieu states, that is being misrecognized when the outputted social flow of the painting-event enters the field of cultural production, but the fact that the painting from the painting-event is articulating the unknown. The unknown meaningless meaning is not recognizable in itself. The lack of the signifier, and the articulation of the unknown, is what prompts the misrecognition and invites an explanation “which is collectively produced and maintained, and the source of the power that the magician appropriates” (Bourdieu 81). The dominating axioms try to take hold of the unknown and divert it towards a mirroring of their views, in turn, reterritorializing and subjecting the painting-event towards the scales of the known. The signature, as Deleuze and Guattari argue, “is not the constituted mark of a subject, but the constituting mark of a domain, an abode. The signature is not the indication of a person; it is the chancy formation of a domain.” (Deleuze and Guattari 317)

5. The Lost-Artist

During this thesis I have set out to explore what flows of affect occur within the painter/painting assemblage before the artwork enters the dominating treadmill of the cultural field of production. The central question throughout this thesis was: What flows of affect occur within the painter/painting assemblage? By using the New Materialist theories and the method of the research-assembly, I have set out to answer this question. The premise was to explore the painting outside the operational anthropocentric social flows of the cultural field of production and explore what the painting is and does by itself. To do this, I have visited Peter Geerts in his studio on a weekly basis and followed and monitored the process between him and the paintings he was working on through interviews and photo-documentation. In my exploration, I have encountered that the painting and painter are not just a regulated result of subjectification and categorization of the social flows of affect in the field of cultural production, but that the painter and painting intra-act in the painting-event and embody the material and semiotic flows of affect in exploration of the unknown. The material and semiotic flows of affect work in unison to produce a material mattering of the painting-event that articulate the invisible, the unseen, and unknown. The material paints of the painting-event intra-act with the unknown meaning of the semiotic flows of affect and produce meaningless meaning. The painting-event finds a consistent mattering signified that is lacking a signifier.

Through the intuition of the infrathin the painter explores the unknown and tries to find consistency in the painting-event. The territorialized social flows of affect act as an entry point for the painter into the painting-event and he deterritorializes them in order to get lost in the unknown. The social flows of affect act as a guide and motive for the painter to make visible what is hidden behind it. The articulation of the unknown manifests through the mattering matter by intra-action of the material and semiotic flows of affect in the painting-event. These measure the body of a consistent signified that is lacking a signifier. The produced painting in the painting-event acts as the face to its body of meaningless meaning. The face of the body makes the canvas available for the social flows of affect to project a signifier upon it and reterritorialize the painting-event back into the known. In this way the unknown seeps into the known. The painting-event is a bridge on which the unknown makes itself apparent to the known.

I have argued how the painting-event acts as a bridge for the unknown to seep into the social consciousness. The case study shows how the painting-event through the flows of affect measures the boundaries that dictate the incantation of our being (Figure 16). In this way the painting-event provides a mattering feedback loop to our socially dominated axioms and discourse. It measures the human among its non-human in a modality dynamic materiality, rather than the linguistic modality of discourse and

narratives. It has shown that it is not the exclusion of the artist from the cultural field of production that is the motor behind exclusivity, but exclusivity is generated by the articulation of the mattering matter in the painting-event. It measures reality and articulates a thing-power from the territorializing material flows of affect in the event. Therefore, the painter is not being excluded from the social spheres, but the artist is getting lost by choice in search of the unknown for the movement and dynamic mattering of vitality and life.

The dynamics of mattering invite the categorization and determination of the unknown by the dominating forces through reterritorialization of the output of the painting-event. The cultural field of production does not, like Abbing suggests, run on the exclusion of the artist. Rather, it is constituted by the flows of affect when it tries to reterritorialize the unknown signified from the painting-event. It is the meaningless signified that prompts the reterritorialization of the unknown in the painting-event back into the signification of the known. The face of the painting-event invites the signifying anthropocentric social flows of the cultural field of production, not the other way around. The painter, therefore, is not excluded from the social flows, but is getting lost in the exploration of the material mattering of the unknown. The results and theory about the painting-event do not offer a tool that is to be used by the painter to paint, but the results are an emergence of the activity of painting, it is its doing. It is how it works through the intuiting of the infrathin. In this way, the painting-event is a way of measuring the constituting boundaries of our human intra-action with reality, towards a deeper understanding of our place amongst our mattering co-constituents. Alternatively, as Peer aptly summarized, painting is the incantation of the imprisonment of our being.

The theories of New Materialism provided insight into what kinds of flows of affect occur within the painting/painter assemblage. The material, social, and semiotic flows gave the opportunity to map the flows in a diagram to explain what way the painting-event articulates (Figure 16). Although the New Materialist discourse is a broad field that is mind-numbingly diverse, its underlying characteristics and concepts gave a consistent application to the questions in this thesis. It has been challenging to write with the deterritorialized abstract concepts the theories embody, nonetheless, they gave insights into how the flows of affect in the painting-event flow. The New Materialist theory and the painting-event seem to have a close relation to each other and they complement each other well. The painting-event could almost serve as a metaphor to the New Materialist theory applied in this thesis.

The New Materialist methodology generated a large amount of data for this thesis. It accumulated thirteen hours of interviews and more than a hundred photos. The open attitude towards research has yielded so much data that it was hard to decide on a path of flight through it. It was somewhat of an

overflow, but this is the nature of New Materialist and Post Human research. Everything is equally important in a rhizomatic structure, to exclude something would render the outcome of the research biased. Of course, as I already addressed in the methodology chapter, asking a question and applying a method is already biased in itself, it seems to be the nature of research and meaning-making. During this process the question arose whether this thesis is a representation of art constituting research, or a representation of research constituting art? The answer probably lies in the middle, somewhere in between, they are co-constituents of the meaning-making apparatus articulated in this thesis.

A lot has been left unsaid and unaddressed in this thesis, and it has given rise to numerous questions that need further exploration. For one, further research is needed to explore the encounter of the painting-event with the field of cultural production to uncover in what ways the painting-event intra-acts with its social flows and how polity is exerted over it. Secondly, exploration is needed how mattering matter projects meaning into our reality. The results of this thesis could instigate research in what way other material configurations articulate mattering meaning. The painting-event of Peer and his works has been exemplary for the concepts of the lost-artist, but further research has to be done to explore if similar events are experienced in other creative expressions. Such as the creative expressions in other abstract painting, figurative painting, sculpting, digital media, dance, etc. Thirdly, research on the grammar of the visual language might give further insight into the mattering of the face of the painting-event. Lastly, further exploration into quantum field theory might give insight into the flows of affecting energy that constitute matter and how they intra-act between humans and non-humans.

To conclude, I hope the substance of this thesis acts as a catalyst to the thinking about our intra-actions with the matter which constitutes us next to its subjectification of information, that it motivates a doing in excess of its being, that it finds intra-action with new paths of flight, and that it is not a static answer to the central question but instead de/re/territorializes into new territories of the unknown.

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7. Appendixes

7.1. *Appendix 1: Interviews: Studio Sessions*

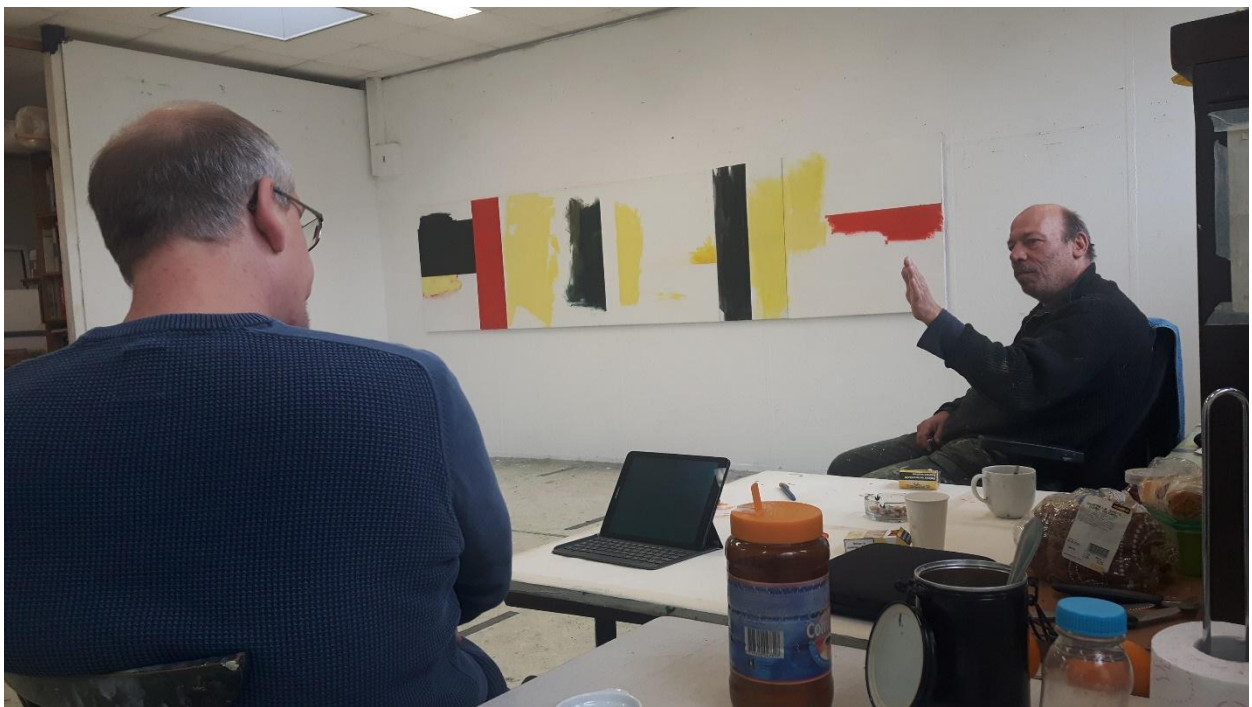
The six interviews that have been done with Peter Geerts for this research have all been recorded and posted on Youtube and will remain accessible there. The links provided here are not advertised on the Youtube platform and will only be known through the listed links below. Please do not share these interview recordings with anyone, share this research paper instead so this stay relationally connected. A playlist can be found here, and the individual sessions are listed below.

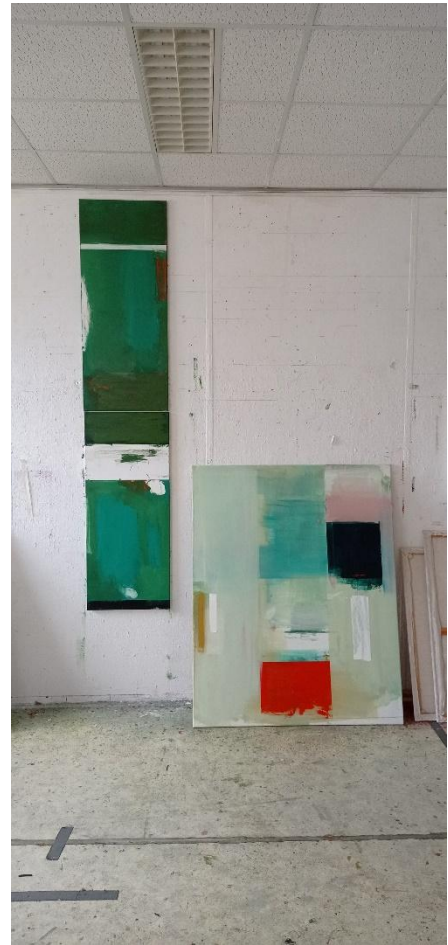
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZxsppqeKqRxErJCuZi2bD8wR57NEJfT>

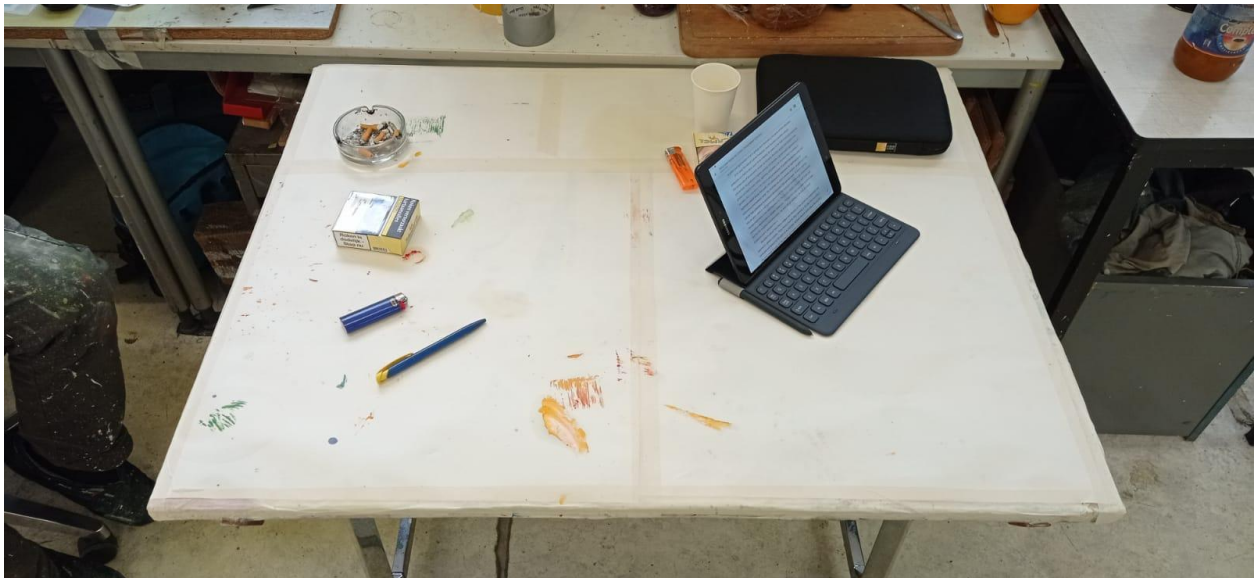
Session	Titel	uu:mm:ss	Link
1	Introductions	02:05:47	https://youtu.be/KcjAxjkEv6E
2	Background & Semiotic Flows of Affect	02:07:03	https://youtu.be/mACc22o6m60
3	Material Flows of Affect	02:05:35	https://youtu.be/kfCdn9Oh6fs
4	Social Flows of Affect	03:05:23	https://youtu.be/c8tmaTBiMTg
5	Affect and the Fight	02:20:35	https://youtu.be/NugFlrhyh88
6	Concluding + Finishing Touch	01:47:13	https://youtu.be/DNwn-h0RI-M

7.2. Appendix 2: Photo Documentation - Studio









7.3. *Appendix 3: Photo Documentation - Red-Yellow-Black Painting-Event*

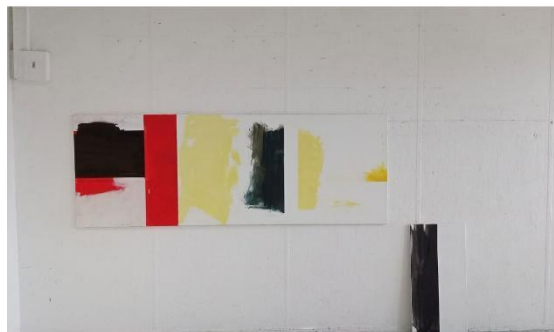
17 AUG 2020



19 AUG 2020



25 AUG 2020



1 SEPT 2020





08 SEPT 2020



7.3.1. Red-Yellow-Black Painting-Event Final State



08 Sept 2020

7.4. Appendix 4: Photo Documentation - Yellow Painting-Event

26 Jun 2020



12 AUG 2020



17 AUG 2020



19 AUG 2020



01 SEPT 2020



01 SEPT 2020



08 SEPT 2020



12 SEPT 2020



7.4.1. Yellow Painting-Event Final State



12 Sept 2020

7.5. *Appendix 5: Photo Documentation - Green Painting-Event*

2014



17 Aug
2020



1 Sept 2020



12 Sept 2020



10 Oct 2020



7.5.1. Green Painting-Event Final State



10 October 2020

7.6. *Appendix 6: Artist's List*

- Anneke Willbrink | <https://www.annekewilbrink.nl/>
- Peter Geerts | <https://www.petergeerts.nl/>
- Tamme de Boer | <http://www.tammedeboer.nl/>